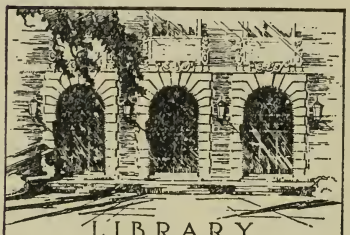

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CASTLE AVON.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"EMILIA WYNDHAM," "RAVENSCLIFFE,"

&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

COLBURN AND CO., PUBLISHERS,

GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1852.

LONDON:
Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.

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CASTLE AVON.

CHAPTER I.

Some days after, Hesther was again sitting there upon the brink of the stream, watching her little boy, who was playing with and endeavouring to feed his young owlet, with which he was delighted.

She kept her eyes fixed upon him, and was sunk in deep thought. The profound melancholy of her countenance, the darkness that usually clouded her beautiful eyes, appeared to deepen, as thus the wretched woman said to herself:

"You are not worthy. That angel of light and you have no fellowship together. You are a black, wicked demon—a murderous, blood-stained wretch!—and he is as fair and spotless as the white rose in its opening bud. You are as dark as the howling, starless winter's night; and he is as sweet as the breaking May morning! And how dare you, fiend, as you know yourself to be—how dare you call that cherub yours?—how dare you? Look at him now! look at those little legs and feet of his! There—he has stripped off his stockings and shoes, and he is wading in the stream—trying to catch the blue-beetles that are shining in the sun. Look at his little legs and feet, and at his arms and hands! Are they not transparent as the leaves of a flower?—as if they were made of wax?—waxen figures, such as I have seen!—but a thousand times more beautiful than waxen figures, or flowers, or anything else! And look at your own brown, shrivelled, withered, dried-up hand and arm! Yes, that's you and that's he! You are all scorched up with bad and evil passions; the very heart within you is at best but a burning cinder—one spot of fire in a

pitchy night—for all within me is night—and he! he is all made up of brightness! Yes, old Mrs. Herne said well—there's the blue of heaven in his eyes, and the golden sun-ray in his hair! And you dare take that thing—that soft, beautiful thing—in your dry, hard, bony arms, and clasp him to your breast?—to your black, black heart? And who says I shall not?" she exclaimed aloud, breaking off her reverie in a strange way, as she was sometimes wont to do, "who says I shall not? But I *will!* I will have him; I will love him; I will keep him; I will grow to him, fasten him to this heart, bad and black as it may be. Nobody shall take him away—no, no—never, never; not till I'm dead—when Hesther's a corpse; ay, then, then, not till then; no, no, not till then. Mother! queen of the fairies! fair lady in silks and satins! with your soft kisses, and your white, hands, and your gentle ways! Yes, you may cry your eyes out; but you shall not have him—no, not you. If *you* bore him, *I* saved him! If you bore the fierce travail-pangs for his sake, I did more. You brought him into the world; and then all anguish was forgotten,

for a man child was born, and your agony was turned to joy. But what did Hesther do? what did she do for his sake? She bore an agony far, far beyond the agony of travail! She bore the agony of crime! the agony of sin! Yes, she crept, in the still night, into the old one's tent, when she was asleep!—that old mother!—and she griped her hard. It was the first time Hesther had done a secret, wicked thing, but she did it for his sake! Oh, horrid, horrid thing, secretly to steal and to kill a sleeping creature, and turn a living soul to cold clay! Oh, the face! the face! the ghastly changed face! Yet she did it! Yes, she did—for him!

"Your agony, fair lady of satins and silks, in your bed of fine linen and down, with curtains of camesoy, was soon over, for your baby-boy was in your arms! Your own—own! your rightful own—own—own! But Hesther's agony is never over. Hesther's agony grows greater and greater, worse and worse; for is not that face, that changed, dreadful, horrid face always there? The boy may be in her arms—the living, beautiful boy! but he is not hers; hers he is not. No rightful

own—own—own! No blood of hers; no child of hers! And ah! whilst she clasps him to her poor heart—that heart that has burned itself to a cinder for him—he has no blood of hers! he is not of hers! Hesther knows herself to be a wicked thief, that has filched her treasure; but she will *never* let him go! Come here, child. Come, as you are, all dripping out of the water; come and kiss Hesther—a good big kiss! Let me dry your little limbs, all running down with crystal water, against this burning, burning heart. Come to me, Charlie! Come to me—come to Hesther! Come out of the water! Do you hear? Come to me!"

"Mammy! mammy! what do you want?" scrambling out of the brook at her call, his limbs glistening with the streaming water, and looking like an opening rose-bud, all bedropped with dew. "Here I am; what do you want?"

"I want you! I want you to come to me, Charlie!" catching him in her arms, and straining him to her bosom. "I want you to call me mammy. I *am* your mammy, ain't I?"

"Yes, you're my mammy — you're my mammy."

"And Charlie loves his mammy?"

"Don't I?" giving her a thousand fond, playful, childish kisses. "Don't I? I love my mammy very much—as much as that—as much as that—and that—as much and more than all the world!"

"But you'll run away from your mammy. They'll tell you to run away from your mammy, and then you'll go."

"No I won't. I'll never, never, leave you, tell me to go who will. But who will tell me that?"

"Mrs. Herne, Jasper, perhaps. The lads —the boys."

"No they won't; and if they did, I'm not going to *go*. They may bid, but I won't go. They may 'tice me, but I won't go. No, mammy, I'll stay with you."

"But suppose—suppose, Charlie, somebody came and said they'd take you back to fairy-land, to that fairy queen so white and beautiful; you'd leave your poor, cross, black mammy then?"

"But I wouldn't—I wouldn't!" and his

heart swelled, and he began to sob. "What do you say that for, mammy; my poor, black mammy! Yes, you are black, and you're poor, and you're cross, sometimes; but, mammy! mammy! I'd be dead ten times over, before they should take me from you."

"What! not to go to the white lady?"

"What do you plague me about the white lady for?" cried the child, impatiently. "I love *you*."

And at such times, Hesther's heart bounded with a joy unutterable; all her jealous pangs subsided, all her remorseful scruples vanished like a dream; and a voice within would exclaim exultingly:

"He's mine! he *is* mine! He's not hers. Blood is not blood; it's no more than water! He cares not for *her;* he loves *me!*"

And her resolution never to restore him would become stronger than ever. Those moments of joy were, however, but as the fleeting gleams in a stormy sky. No sooner did she see the child again engaged amid the springs and flowers, restored, as it were, to that element of purity and beauty to which he seemed to belong, than the old feelings were revived; to

be succeeded by agonies of remorse, if she found him mingling with the gipsies, surrounded by children of his own age, depraved, coarse, and cruel; for then, her excellent, natural understanding represented but too violently the fearful hazards to which she was exposing him, amid the sin and pollution that was there.

Then the crime she was hourly committing, in thus withholding the child from his parents; the cruel injury she was inflicting upon the being she so loved, by the degradation to which she exposed him, would present itself with a painful intensity. Her agonies would be dreadful, but alas! without result. She wrestled fiercely against her convictions; and every struggle with conscience, with that voice of rectitude which still spoke within, only ended in a more desperate resolution to keep him in defiance of everything. The moral dangers to which she thus exposed him were indeed awful. Whether these people, to whom she belonged, were genuine gipsies or not, I cannot exactly say, being too little acquainted with the manners of these tribes of wanderers to decide; but, certainly, a more

thoroughly degraded set of half-savage vagabonds could scarcely exist. In the midst of civilised society, they led the life of the most barbarous and unenlightened heathens, yet without possessing those wild virtues which ordinarily belong to the untutored life of nature. They had no high imaginations, no rude feelings of honour, no strong and generous affections among them; they were, for the most part, a set of brutal thieves greedy of gain in any form; prone to the grossest indulgence of their appetites, particularly those of eating and drinking, and addicted to all the petty vices incident to low gambling; they were quarrelsome, covetous, grasping, envious, and malignant.

These evil tempers might be more or less discernible; and, among some individuals, more favoured by accident or nature, faint signs of something higher and better in feeling might be found. But the exceptions were rare; in any case, it was merely a matter of degree. And it was to this mass of corruption, of the very lowest kind, that Hesther was knowingly exposing the lovely child! Knowingly; for she had in her a native sense of superiority,

which taught her the fearful wrong she was committing, not only by withholding the child from his parents, but in the daily and hourly evils to which she thus subjected him; do what she would to obviate their ill effect.

Fearful! fearful trial!

Can he, can any one, walk unscathed through such a fiery furnace?

Yes, they can; and, more, they *have*.

But, will he?

If fine natural good dispositions, if an understanding, which even at that early age was remarkable for its clearness and depth, if a sort of intuitive perception of justice, a tender, affectionate heart, and a character that seemed quite *hungry* after good, if these precious gifts of nature can avail unassisted to ward off the evil influences that surround him, the boy will be saved. There can be no doubt that moral dispositions, as well as the gifts of genius and talent, are by no means equally apportioned to individuals upon their mysterious advent into

this world. That they should be so, neither experience nor revelation would lead us to expect; all supreme justice requires from man, is to render an account of the portion he has received.

This child was remarkably endowed in this respect. Perhaps it might be his descent, for his father was one of the most excellent of men, perhaps these boons of nature are transcendental and dispensed by a decree and rule above the regular workings of nature's appointed laws. Vain but most interesting speculations.

The child was of a social, joyous nature, in spite of the delicacy of his perceptions, which exposed him to suffer in a way his fellows never did, either in his own person or in sympathy with those around him; but in spite of this delicacy, his courage was high, his heart gay and joyous, and he loved to mingle with other boys and share their noisy games, especially those which called out bodily force and activity.

In strength he was surpassed by many others of his age, in activity and dexterity he was without a peer. Strength he was not

much called upon to exercise. There was little fighting going on among these wild lads, less probably than at our own public schools; their spirit, courage, and love of enterprise, under the rude, half-savage life which they led, evaporated in other ways. And besides this, the beautiful fair-haired child, with his clear sweet voice, his sweet gaiety, his goodness and kindness, and the refinement that hung about him as a sort of radiance, investing all he did, produced the greatest effect upon the imaginations of those around him. These rude but not altogether stupid or brutalized beings, all loved and adored him; their love, indeed, partook almost of the nature of worship. A hand was never lifted against Charlie; had it been needed, ten thousand swords, to use the sentence hyperbolically, ten thousand swords would have leapt from their scabbards to avenge him. In sober prose, twenty or thirty rough brown fists would have been doubled to punish even a look that might have threatened to offend him.

He lived among them, and yet was not of them. Bright gold mixed with, and yet not sullied, by the impure clay. There was that

about Charlie with which evil could not mingle, it rolled off as a drop of rain from the leaf of the lily, leaving not a trace behind. But the most remarkable things at present to be observed in this embryo moral life which we are describing, were an undeviating love of truth, the strictest rectitude with regard to property, and a power of moral reasoning, which elevated him to the rank of a sort of prophet in the midst of this rabble crew.

Charlie plunged in the brook, and played about and fondled Hesther; and fed and caressed his quaint pet and friend, for some time. At last, a loud burst of merriment, halloos, shouts, and laughter, intermingled, came sounding up the valley. The child pricked his ears, listened, and then flinging down the rushes and flowers with which he was amusing himself, started up, threw his arms round his mammy's neck with a force that almost dragged her to the ground, imparted an impetuous kiss upon her cheek—his custom upon meeting or leav-

ing her—and ran down the strath to the place of the encampment. There was a crowd of gipsy-boys gathered together upon a little grassy plain, formed by the winding stream, and lying between it and the mountains.

A rough-looking group they were; in dirty and tattered garments of all descriptions; mostly barefooted, bare-legged, bare-headed, and bare-armed; some with battered hats, some with old weather-stained caps, but all looking picturesque in their rude attire. All were well-made, lithe, slender, and vigorous in form; mostly with handsome, bronzed faces; large, dark, flashing eyes; and abundance of hair, black as night, hanging in dishevelled elf-locks around their animated features. There was something in their looks that pleased and displeased at once: a spirit and life, but also an expression of cunning and of slyness, in the turn of the eye, and in certain casts of the face, that was particularly disagreeable, and which contrasted painfully with the freedom of their motions and gestures. You felt disappointed; you seemed to expect that so much vigorous development of limbs and action

would be attended by a truthful and generous spirit; but it was not so. They seemed indeed as if it were their business to cheat others, and to be ever upon the watch to prevent being cheated themselves.

At the present moment, however, the nature of the *boy*, if one may say so, is in full exercise, and that of the gipsy in abeyance: the group, in the highest enjoyment, being engaged in some sport that excited their greatest interest. They are hallooing, shouting, laughing; and the yelping of their dogs, and the loud cries with which they are urging them on, show that their sport is that common sport of boy and man-nature; namely, the chase, or destruction of animal life.

Our little Charlie has run madly down the valley at full speed, and now, panting for breath, his golden hair flying from his face, which is glowing with health, and is the colour of the rose, he pushes his way into the throng, elbowing this way and that, not asking questions, but wanting and wishing to see for himself.

The rocks and stones are falling in confusion down one side of this tiny marsh,

being insterpersed with little knots of brush-wood and brambles. In front of them was a confused crowd of boys and their dogs, curs and mongrels of every degree, with a few terriers and purely-bred cockers—how come by may be guessed. All, boys and dogs, are busily employed in persecuting a young fox, which a lad standing upon the stones holds captive by a string, long enough to allow the animal to run about and hide and dodge among the bushes.

Poor little Reynard! He is in what may be called in his prime of cubhood—not a little cub, and not a full-grown fox; he retains his charming look of fun, slyness, cleverness, and yet *ingénuité*, to use the French word, which renders his face at that age, perhaps, the most charming one in the animal creation. His beautiful long brush drags upon the ground, as now he runs to this side, now to that; now pauses for a moment, and peeps out from among the stones, brambles, and yellow-broom, as if seeking for help, or hoping for mercy.

The yellow broom flowers topple over his pretty nose, the blue-bells and pink centaury

are wagging their heads among the stones around him, and the sun is shining so sweetly and beautifully upon that side of the scene. Upon the other are the savage boys and their cruel and excited dogs; all rushing forward, with loud yells and shouts, to tear the pretty, intelligent being to pieces.

The full force of the contrast struck upon the child's lively and tender imagination at once; and darting from the circle, he rushed forward, crying out:

"Oh, don't! don't! Let him be! let him be!"

But the boys were far too deeply engrossed in their sport to listen to the voice of remonstrance.

A loud laugh greeted Charlie's cry of distress, and "Get out of the way! get out of the way, or you'll be worried, too!"

And at the moment half a dozen dogs, urged by the voices of their masters, sprang furiously up the bank. The little fox dashed away, and cleared the mountain face before them, for one brief moment he escaped, the next the string pulled him back. The boy who held him in custody shouted with ferocious glee, as the poor

little victim fell backward, and the dogs flew upon him.

"Oh, don't! don't! Let him go! Loose the string! Let him go! Oh, they'll tear him to pieces! They *are* tearing him to pieces! Vincent, Sterne, Roberts, let him go! let him go!" the child shouted desperately, scrambling up the rocks, and with reckless valour flinging himself into the very midst of the furious dogs, vainly hoping to snatch the victim from them.

"What are you about? Keep back! keep back! keep back!" one of them shouted from behind him. "They'll be upon him! They'll worry him! They'll tear him to pieces!"

And as if moved by one general impulse, the boys rushed up the steep after their dogs, enchanted by the brave child's intrepidity, and hastening to rescue him from the imminent danger to which he was exposing himself.

It was a scene of the wildest uproar and confusion for a few minutes. Nothing could be distinguished in this crowd of boys and dogs, who were struggling, battling, yelling, shouting, and screaming.

Then in the midst of the tumult the crowd opens a little, and gives way to a wild and beautiful figure, hair streaming, eyes flashing fire; dashing down the steep, holding the rescued creature in his arms.

The dogs pursue him furiously—savagely. The gipsy-boys, screeching and screaming, hurry after, shouting to the dogs to keep back, and rushing forwards to save their favourite.

They succeed. At last the storm subsides. Each dog has been brought to reason and obedience to his master's voice; and the hubbub ends in a sort of grumbling, discontented silence upon all sides.

Charlie has seated himself upon a stone on the opposite side of the little plain; he is gasping for breath, but he still holds the fox fast. He keeps his muzzle clasped in his hand, for the ungrateful little beast is making unheard of efforts to bite his deliverer.

The other boys, followed by their dogs, are wandering over the meadow in a slow, lounging, discontented manner—vexed to have their sport spoiled, delighted with the bravery and hardihood of the child, angry that he should have

rescued the fox, yet consoled at finding the animal still a captive.

"It's too bad, I declare! What business has he spoiling sport? What a fellow it is! why, the dogs were like lions. There's nothing that lad fears; why should he? What can hurt *him?* he's a fairy child. Fairy child or not, he shall not spoil our sport, and that I'm agoing to tell him, and get my fox back. I'm glad it didn't get off, at all events."

Such were their remarks, as some of them lounged idly up to where Charlie sat, and then one of the boys began.

"Charlie, my fine fellow! how come you to spoil our sport in this fashion?"

"Because I thought it a very cruel, and a very unjust sport. What had the little fox done? And a dozen dogs against one! that's mean and cowardly, I think, and unjust too, I call it."

"Here's a fine fellow! justice to a fox! Whoever heard the like of that? What are you going to preach about next, Master Methodist? last time it was a cock we mustn't throw at; something in that, there might be, inasmuch as chanticleer never hurt any one but

hisself. But now it's a fox! Well, I suppose if a roaring lion came amongst us, we mustn't touch him."

"It's not a roaring lion; and if it were, he ought to have justice," said Charlie, hugging the fox closer to his breast, who had now ceased to struggle, and sat there, his sharp eyes fixed upon the speakers, as if listening to what could be urged against or for his defence. "If he *were* a lion, he ought to have fair play."

"Fair play! you're always talking of justice and fair play, as if anybody cared for fair play."

"I care for it, and you care for it; and we all care for it!" cried Charlie, with enthusiasm. "Gipsy lads you are, all; but that's no reason. You know what fair play is, and why shouldn't you do it, by beast or man, one and all, for that's what I call noble and true."

"Where did he get all his big words, I wonder?"

"Oh! the fairies come and tell him them in his dreams. Ain't it so Charlie? Where do you get all your grand notions, little lad?"

"Come, give me the fox," said the boy who

owned the animal, "and let's have done with it; and I'll forgive you for spoiling sport. Keep down, Badger," to his dog. "Yes, twelve to one *was* unfair odds, I'll own so much, any how."

And he came forward to take possession of the fox, but Charlie held back and squeezed the creature the tighter.

"It ain't yours! Give him to me—do you hear?" said the boy, angrily.

"No, it ain't mine—I know it ain't mine—but it's not yours, perhaps, either. How did you get it?"

"What business is it of yours, how I got it. Give it to me—give it to me, I say. Do you hear? I'll give you a good 'un upon the head, else."

"What are you going to do with him?"

"Do with him? what I like."

"And, what will you like; worry him, and torment him, and be cruel to him?"

"Worry him, to be sure. What is a fox good for, but to make fun of?"

"Then you shan't have it, to make fun of," and turning suddenly round, he was about to set the animal at liberty; but the thought

flashed across his mind that then all the dogs would be upon him in a moment, so he held him fast, and said:

"Only look at his funny, clever face, and his eyes! Why he looks as if he was smiling. Don't worry him, Ben; make a pet of him. If you'd give him me, I'd make a pet of him. It's not like a man to worry a poor little dumb creature like this."

"Not like a man!" said Ben, contemptuously, "why what do men do—don't they badger-bait, and bull-bait, and bear-bait, and fight in the ring, and—"

"Well, it's not like what I call a man, if they do."

"And what are beasts made for, if we mayn't make sport out of them?"

"I don't know what they're made for; but this I know, I wouldn't, if I were a big boy, hurt a poor little dumb animal—no, not for all the world. So don't, Ben; let this little fox alone, and—"

We shall be tired of this childish pleading, to which I feel that I am not doing justice. This time, indeed, Charlie did not probably speak with his usual eloquence, for Ben was

not to be persuaded. In the meantime, the other boys, tired of the moral argument, had taken themselves away, they and their dogs, in pursuit of some other diversion; and the two boys were left alone, so intent upon what they were saying, that they did not for some time perceive it. At last, Charlie, looking round, spied his advantage and turning his bright blue eyes sparkling with triumph upon great, heavy, big Ben, he said, abruptly breaking off the colloquy:

"Now promise me you will not let him be worried again, or—"

"Or what will you do? for I won't promise you anything; but this I'll do, I'll set the dogs upon him the moment I gets him to myself, see if I don't—and that because you plague me so about him."

"You will, will you? Say that again."

"I will—that I will, and I'll swear to it if you like."

"Then this is what *I* shall do," cried the child, exultingly; and opening his arms wide, he released the fox, who speeded like lightning across the grass, and was out of sight among the rocks in a moment.

Big Ben turned pale with anger.

"And this is what I'll do—*now*—" doubling his ponderous fist with a gesture as if with one blow he would annihilate the delicate being before him.

"No, you won't—no, you won't!" the child repeated, calm and unflinching, not even moving himself on one side to avoid the blow, but confronting the young ruffian with a serene eye and unblenching cheek. "No, Big Ben, you won't hurt *me* because I took the part of the unfortunate."

"I could find it in my heart to kill you," muttered Big Ben, dropping his hand and turning away sulkily.

"Oh, you're a great, big, rough fellow," cried Charlie, springing after him, and twining his arm round that of the young Hercules. "Oh, you're a great, big, rough fellow!—but if your wrath is like a lion, a n't you generous as a lion?—generous to a little lad like me, as the lion was to the little dog, Big Ben, ain't you?—ain't you? And, now, you won't be sorry a poor beast is got safe and happy home?"

"You've such a way with you," said the

strong one, stooping down, and with his great, rough hand caressing the little boy's head and its golden, silky curls, "you've such a way! Generous! that's one of your words. Do you think the brute of a Big Ben *can* be generous?"

"He is — why shouldn't he? — Why shouldn't he be a noble, brave fellow, such as I want him to be?—one who wouldn't hurt a fly, yet would fly at a lion. That's what Big Ben ought to be; that's what he will be."

"I don't know for that; perhaps he might if he had a little fellow like you always at his elbow, to conjure up the good in him, if there is any good. But its main little there is of that same, I'm afraid; and when you're gone back to Hesther, I'll be as bad again as ever. Why does she keep so lonesome and out of the way? However, I *am* glad the poor beast wasn't worried, after all."

CHAPTER II.

The simple event above related, laid the foundation of much which seriously influenced the boy's after life. In the first place, it was the beginning of a close friendship between Big Ben and Little Charlie—a friendship which Hesther, in spite of the cruel torments of her jealousy, could not witness without a certain satisfaction.

Big Ben was the Milo, the Hercules, the strong man among these rude gipsy-boys, and Hesther, who could not help trembling for the very existence of the precious and delicate being exposed to the rude contact of these hard and savage natures, looked upon the protection he was now certain to obtain as an assurance of her darling's safety.

She therefore stifled the envious pangs she felt, and looked on with patience when she saw Charlie happy and excited, playing round the great rough boy like some delicate spaniel about a big water-dog; or sitting by him upon the grass, on the side of the coursing brook, his little arm locked in the huge one of his companion, prattling away, lifting up his blue intelligent eyes, and fixing them upon the face of his half-surly, half-pleased friend. In truth the child had already began to exercise over Big Ben the same strange fascination which he possessed over Hesther; and, as the wild affections of the one were rivetted upon him with a measureless intensity, so over that heap of heavy clay—this great animal of a boy—the voice, the eye, the winning manners of a creature so different, possessed a strange power. In the heart that lay hidden within the bosom of that rude unformed Colossus, there were stirrings of life; faint throbs of emotion they were at first, but gradually they strengthened; faint beams of light, too, broke amid the darkness of the intellect, casting gleams and shadows, and revealing forms till then quite obscured and unperceived. The voice, that voice which first

awakened chaos, and called forth harmony and beauty from the dull elements, was breathing upon the uncouth mass. That precious voice now found utterance through the eyes, in the sweet lively tones, and the engaging loveliness of this good and innocent child; and a spirit was awakened within that wild untutored gipsy bosom, a perception, faint though it might be, of new and better things—of goodness and of beauty.

The first action of little Charlie after the release of the fox had been one of great moral loveliness, displaying at once his sense of justice, his admiration of what was right, and his own generous spirit of self-sacrifice. Struck with the conduct of the once harsh and too often cruel boy, the child after he had parted from Big Ben, retraced his steps up the glen in deep meditation.

His thoughts had taken another turn, and the fox being no longer the object of compassion and interest, his attention was turned to his late master. He began to think of the loss Big Ben had sustained, and to measure, by the intensity of delight it would have afforded him-

self to possess such a favourite, the extent of the sacrifice to another.

He began to doubt whether if he had restored the little sagacious rogue to Big Ben, he would not have done what was more right and good-natured, than in thus letting him go. The child's conscience was puzzled between his humanity and the affectionate esteem he began to entertain for his companion.

"I wonder whether Ben is very sorry—as sorry as I should be if they took my little howlet away—my dear little howlet,—perhaps he is."

So he went on thinking, and pitying, and dissatisfied with himself, because he could make no compensation to Big Ben. All at once a thought struck him, and he stood still as if thunder-struck.

Oh yes! that would do—that would compensate to Big Ben. But should he? could he? Could he bear to part with it?—his queer little howlet, which he intended so to love and play with; the friend and companion of his solitude, and the object of so much adoration to his warm untutored heart. Should he?

Yes! yes! he would—that he would; and he started towards home as fast as he could.

First thoughts are best when they are generous; second thoughts are but too usually those of prudential calculation. First thoughts are of the heart; second thoughts of the head. He seemed afraid to trust himself with reflection; he hurried rapidly on.

Hesther was still sitting upon the stone, leaning her back against the solitary tree. She was looking down the glen, watching impatiently for his return. He never left her but she was in terror for his safety—a vague sort of terror, for which she did not attempt to account, and to which she yielded without resistance, just as she did to every other feeling, good or bad, as it arose. She was never easy when he was long away, because she lived but in his presence, and also she was in continual dread that something might arise to part them.

She had remained there restless and impatient for some time, and was just about to rise and walk down the glen to look after her Charlie, when she saw him coming flying towards her. She opened her arms, as she was

wont to do, to receive him, but instead of flinging himself as usual upon her breast, he passed her, and hurried to the place where he had built himself a kind of cage to hold his little owl.

"What are you going there for? I thought how it would be," she began angrily; "you can't think of Hesther now. You've no eyes but for your howlet. I wish with all my heart it was drowned in the stream. I've a good mind to wring its neck, haven't I? Ever since you've had it, you've loved it better than me.

"See how he's hugging it!" she went on half aloud to herself. "Did you ever see anything like that child? Why, he's crying over it, I declare! What a heart of love it is," she added with a sigh; then more loudly, and with increased irritation, she went on, "Pretty fellow, you are, crying for joy, to see that nasty beast again, and not a word for Hesther!—not a word for Hesther, and you away, I don't know how long."

The child's heart had been too full for him to pay attention to anything; he neither heard nor saw any object, but that upon which his

whole soul was intent; but these reproaches reached him, and turning to her, with his eyes swimming full of tears, he said:

"But, mammy, I do love him so."

"I know you do—a little foolish beast! Well, well, children must—but let him alone now. What are you going to do with him? Can't you come and have your supper? Why can't you let him alone?"

"Oh, mammy, mammy! Oh, my little howlet! my little howlet!"

"Well, what a fuss you are making about your little howlet. Of all the days in the year, why make such a to-do about him just now?"

"Because—because I'm going to part with him."

"Part with him! What's in the child? Nonsense, your little howlet! No, no! If it's because you think I'm jealous of him, and hate him—why so perhaps I may be, and so perhaps I do. But I'm a bad creature, Charlie; Hesther's jealous of everything. Never mind her; don't heed it! Part with your

little howlet that you loved so! and all to ease poor Hesther's heart! No, that you shan't. You *are* a darling to think of it. But don't think of it again. Part with it!" she kept repeating, her heart quite melted. "No, that you never shall do for me!"

"It's not for you, mammy; though I'd give it you *first* if you liked it; but you don't like it; it's for Big Ben."

"Big Ben! And how come *you* to be so thick with Big Ben? I doubt whether he's a proper companion for you, my own jewel, for he's a bad boy."

"Oh! he's not a bad boy; but a good, generous boy. Only hear, mammy."

And then, still holding the bird fondly in his arms, he came to her knee, and with great fervour, his eyes sparkling and his bosom heaving, related the history of the fox, concluding with:

"And so I will give him my howlet. It is all I have in the world, and I'll give him my howlet."

There was a strange light in Hesther's eye, a passionate admiration of moral worth—that

passion which, so long as it continues to exist, seems to redeem the darkest nature.

"And you'll give it him?"

"Yes, I will—I will. But I must go now, mammy; don't keep me now. If I don't do it at once, I can't do it."

"Go, go!" said she.

And the child turned away and went upon his generous errand.

"Big Ben," he said, as he went up to that hero, who now indolent and moody as some heroes in repose are apt to be, was sitting upon a tussock of grass, plucking idly the herbs which grew around him, and sunk, apparently, in no very agreeable reflections. He was indeed thoroughly out of sorts, for he felt *ennuyé* and dull, that most insupportable affliction to people of his class of life, who but rarely exposed to feel it, endure it when they must, with peculiar impatience. "Big Ben! What are you doing, Big Ben?"

"Doing! What should I be doing, who have nothing to do? Thinking what a fool I was to let you have that fox, and turn him out so. I should have been playing and

amusing myself if I had the little fellow now. I'll tell you what," he added, getting up in great ill-humour, "I didn't serve you out for it then; but I've a good mind—"

"It's not because I'm afraid you will serve me out," said the little Charlie, "for I'm sure you won't; but it's because I, who never had a pet before, know how sorry you must be to lose yours: so I have brought you mine, which I hope you'll please to take, and love it, and be as happy with it as I used to be."

"You're not going to give me that howlet!" said Ben, opening wide his big, black eyes.

"But I am; and you're welcome to it! You'll like it very much! It's so droll and pretty; and, perhaps—perhaps, Big Ben, when you've got it, you'll let me come now and then to look at it, and feed it?"

"You're not a going to give this ere howlet to me!" Ben repeated, still keeping his eyes wide open with amazement.

"Yes; pray take it!—to make you amends. Here, this is the way to hold it. Don't hurt it, Ben, with your big hands—poor little thing!"

"*I* hurt it! I touch it! I take it! I'll be

d—d first! *I* take your howlet from you!" cried Ben, his huge chest heaving with emotion, and an odd moisture coming into his eyes. "I take it! Well, but you are a good little fellow, to come now and bring your only treasure, the thing you love best in all the world, and offer it to me! Why, there's a something in it, Charlie, I don't know what, but it seems — And hang me, if ever I'll let boy or man plague you or contradict you again; never believe Big Ben else! No, no; take your pretty, funny bird back again, and love me a bit, that's all!"

And in this simple manner the friendship between these two apparently incongruous beings began.

———

So soon as Hesther learned how Big Ben had received her little boy's offer, she was delighted with him; she thought nothing too good for him; treated him with the greatest cordiality, and could even resign her Charlie to him for hours, so grateful was she that her child's

feelings had been spared, and he, made happy again.

This friendship produced permanent effects. Under the protection of Big Ben, Charlie was inclined, and Hesther suffered him, to visit the encampment much more frequently than he had been before accustomed to do, and to associate more with the other gipsy-boys.

The moral contagion to which she thus exposed him, she thought less of; satisfied that he was quite safe, so far as personal security was concerned, under the care of his doughty friend; for she was herself becoming more and more gloomy and melancholy, more than ever addicted to solitude, and indifferent to everything. The crime she had committed seemed to hang like a heavy weight upon her conscience; a fearful darkness pervaded her soul, in which she groped with a dim perception, almost ignorant of the extent of the sin, the remembrance of which pressed so heavily upon her heart. Incapable of that repentance which would have been to her a renewing, and a regeneration, her remorse seemed to be devouring her by inches, without producing any real change or improvement. Every day

she became more self-absorbed and more morose, till the voice, even of the charmer, seemed to have lost its power. The intense interest she had felt in the moral welfare of her little boy seemed to be changing into indifference and apathy. She loved to indulge her morbid melancholy in solitude, and left him to take his chance. A fearful chance it was! among those uncultivated and vicious barbarians. But she seemed content now, contented so that he came back to her at night, and she saw him safe and sound.

This was a fearful change for the worse, as regarded him. And now the tide of evil began to set in strong. Evil companions surrounded him on every side; all the vices to which that form of savage life is prone—a life not carried on in the wild freedom of nature, but exposed to the corruptions of civilised society, without its attendant antidotes—flowing round him like a flood.

What will become of him? Is it possible that he can escape? Can beneficent nature, however rich and lavish her endowments, suffice to shield him from the mass of bad which

besets him in every form, and upon every side?

But we must leave him, and return to his mother and Hernana.

CHAPTER III.

A CHARMING creature, was Hernana, as I have said. So thought her father, so thought Lady Aylmer, so thought Philip Gorhambury.

The life Mr. Lovel, Lady Aylmer, and Hernana lived, continued much such as I have described. Mr. Lovel wore the same shabby hats and coats, in spite of all his daughter could do; and would not, even to gratify Lady Aylmer, be persuaded to lay out one shilling upon himself, unless in matters of indispensable necessity. And, as he had a contempt of appearances, which amounted almost to a fault—and was, indeed, the only fault that could be discovered in him—this indispensable necessity

had often been long evident to other people, before he could be persuaded to acknowledge it himself.

Hernana and Lady Aylmer had recourse to numberless little feminine contrivances to remedy the disorder of his toilette. Sometimes a coat or waistcoat were surreptitiously introduced; sometimes the battered hat disappeared, and a spruce beaver was found upon the peg in its stead. The coat or waistcoat was usually put on without observation; probably the change was unperceived. The new beaver could not so easily escape; he would take it down from its peg, sweep it with his coat sleeve, turn it round, fit it upon his head, look rather discomposed and discomfited in it, search about for his old favourite, but that not being to be found, would at last go forth with the stranger upon his head, looking so half-rueful, half-ashamed, that Hernana could not help laughing.

The whole time of this good man was spent in the indefatigable discharge of his professional duties. The city of G—— was large, and had been long greatly neglected, both by its clergy and its municipality. Mr. Gorhambury's parish

was a very extensive one, and comprehended some of the very worst quarters of the place. The sum of crime and misery, of ignorance, vice, disease, and sorrow, of ill-conduct, mistaken views, barbarity, darkness, and perversion, accumulating under such circumstances, is immense. One only effectual remedy has as yet been found, or according to my persuasion, ever will be found to this array of evils; namely, the efficient preaching of the Gospel. Other blessings will follow, I am persuaded, as a matter of course. But it is vain to attempt permanently to improve the condition of the poor by any other means.

All your lecturings and teachings, and cultivations of the intellect, and taste for the beautiful; even your thrice and ever blessed, and to be praised sanitary reforms, will prove vain, so long as man is but as the beasts which perish, without accountability, and without a future. With these, be his condition what it may, he is still a man; a noble, exalted, spiritual being, lifted above himself by communion with the All-wise, and All-good. Deprived of these, be he in a palace, or a dungeon;

ruling an empire, or grinding at the mill; his is a poor, futile, maimed, mutilated existence, robbed of its true distinction—the Infinite.

"Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!"

The oyster may exchange the sentiment with the infidel. Incessantly did Mr. Lovel labour at this great task; his days were spent among the dwellings of the forlorn, and wretched, and darkened creatures. There were so many; such numbers upon numbers; such hosts upon hosts. It was as if one would exterminate the flies or locusts of plagued Egypt. But he laboured perseveringly and unremittingly, nevertheless. Oh! he would not that one of these little ones should perish. And countless were the souls he saved; or, if this be thought too presuming an expression, countless were the souls he restored to a better life, and to a higher destiny; countless the death-beds of poor, weak, miserable sufferers, that he elevated, and consoled by the idea of the divine sympathy; countless the sinners that, having first humbled, he brought into submission to the Divine Master; countless the drunkards that

became good and happy fathers of families; countless the slatterns and the scolds, who exchanged their languid indolence and their peevish irritability, for industry, cheerfulness, and contentment. Long, long, he worked, an ill-requited and obscure labourer; but the savour of these labours mounted on high.

The great ones of this city, at last, began to perceive that a good agency was at work. The obscure Curate became an object of attention. His advice was asked, his suggestions attended to, means were furnished for more extended good. This was his recompense here, a high and delightful recompense. When he saw sewers cleansed, and habitations repaired, the blessed light of heaven, the blessed breath of heaven, and above all, the living springs of pure God-given water pouring where all had been darkness, filth, and disease, he *was* repaid. Did he care for hats and coats whilst he was doing this? Too little, perhaps. But his Hernana and his Louisa cared for *one*, who cared for every one on earth but himself.

Economy, however, was the order of the day with them all. Lady Aylmer's desolated heart found its best consolation, childless widow as she was, in administering to the wants of the wretched. She made herself children of the children of misery. She did not, it is true, carry her charitable penuriousness quite so far as Mr. Lovel. A certain elegance and beauty in the life which surrounded her seemed indispensable to her well-being, necessary to maintain in her that serenity of spirit which is required for all successful labour; but the luxuries the superfluities, and above all, the ostentations of life, she despised and defied.

Hernana loved order, and beauty too; but she loved generosity, and a Spartan contempt of ease and luxury still better. She profited by, and preserved, a happy medium between the sacred indifference of her father and the perhaps too sensitive dependance of Lady Aylmer upon externals.

Now I think it is time to make you acquainted with Philip Gorhambury.

Mr. Gorhambury, in secret—a very dissatisfied and unhappy man, took up his abode at the Castle, where he continued to live with the exception of those portions of the year when he was in residence. He was a prebendary of the cathedral, as well as rector of the largest living in the city of G——. Uneasy and irritable, he seemed to be under the influence of some maledictory bann, yet everything he touched appeared to turn to gold. He, therefore, became exorbitantly rich; but, as too often happens in such circumstances, all seemed to become blank, tasteless, and onerous, till even the grasshopper was a burden.

What a priceless treasure is a rich, large, loving heart! What dire penury lies in a cold, unsympathising, selfish temper. What are your heaps of gold to such a one? They are apples of Sodom, indeed! Mr. Gorhambury knew that he had been guilty of a very base, dishonourable action—a crime, as regarded the will—a false deceit, as related to the proofs

offered of the child's death; and therefore, before the tribunal of his own conscience, he stood a miserable, degraded caitiff. He felt, and he looked as he felt, that he was in spite of all his external wealth and show, a miserable, degraded being. But worse for him, even than this, his heart was utterly shrivelled up. One has heard of such hearts, no larger than a hazel-nut — incapable of expansion, as of warmth—of the generous glow, as of the generous swell. What can life offer to such? what can wealth do for them?

He was become incapable even of feeling pity. He was so miserable himself that he envied everybody. The very beggar who begged an alms at his gate he envied. His was naturally an envious nature; and to the envious all sympathy with his fellows is denied, except with those more unhappy than himself.

And who more wretched than Mr. Gorhambury? No one.

He could take no pleasure in relieving those, with whom he would almost have changed places. To increase happiness affords no joy to

the envious man. That large field of delight open to the wealthy is denied to him.

Mrs. Gorhambury was not a person to call forth higher and better aspirations. She was an excessively talented, superior woman. Genius she had not, but everything else, to an extraordinary degree—ingenuity, talent, cleverness, industry indefatigable.

Her paintings, her sculpture, her carvings in wood—even her very needlework, when upon that she condescended to employ herself—all alike exceeded anything ever produced by amateurs before. She had, likewise, a very extensive knowledge of languages; and, for a woman, very considerable erudition as a musician, in which, whether as a composer or performer, she was most remarkable.

Such accomplishments commanded the admiration of everybody, and were a source of great pride and satisfaction to her husband; but they were *too* much. All life seemed absorbed by them. There were no spare moments for sympathy and confidence; none of those dear and tender dawdling fireside hours, which fuse heart in heart. Even had Mr. Gorhambury's

heart been capable of such fusion, the occasion never presented itself. Mrs. Gorhambury was absorbed in art, and in art he took not the slightest interest.

The accession of fortune which had proved so barren and unprofitable a gift to him, had to her become a source of great enjoyment. The abundant means thus furnished for the cultivation of her talents, the power it gave of commanding the society of all the most eminent in the several circles of the arts, were enjoyed to their full extent. She improved rapidly, wonderfully; her productions in every way fully merited the admiration they were sure to receive. But what was all this to the dreary spirit of her husband? loathing, as he did in his diseased frame of mind, the very sight of the objects upon which so much pains and time had been expended.

One pleasant chat—one tender inquiry—even one melancholy murmur of discontent—one good hearty falling out, would have been something—a communion, a relief.

And how was it as regarded the only son of this all-accomplished woman?

The mother exercises an influence incalculable upon the son. The mother may almost be called the destiny of the son.

Upon Philip Gorhambury, the effect of his mother's character and pursuits was great, and the character of the results very dubious.

He inherited much of her delicate perception and fine taste; her talents seemed to descend to him. He drew extremely well, and his love for music amounted to a passion.

From a mere schoolboy he had been celebrated for his performance upon the only instrument he then cultivated—his own matchless power of musical whistling; but, as he grew up to manhood, he chose others, and became with little pains a first-rate performer upon the violoncello.

His mother delighted in those talents, and encouraged them by every means in her power. By her example the young man was taught to love poetry rather than wisdom—beauty than usefulness—art than politics. The cultivation and worship of beauty was his religion, as it was hers. Even the Almighty God above us

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was to be worshipped in His "revelation as the Beautiful."

Such habits of thought enfeeble and imperceptibly degrade the mind. It is a pagan worship after all. The sublime—the pure—the light of lights is not there.

Philip grew up elegant, refined, full of delicacy, accomplishment, and outward attraction; but susceptible, self-indulgent, with no bold, generous, or manly aspirations after the higher good as regarded himself, and still less as regarded others.

How different from Hernana—the very contrast to Hernana! Was it for this reason that they loved each other? Upon her side, perhaps. She had few opportunities for comparison. Philip in talents, accomplishments, elegance of appearance, and, above all, in a peculiar sweetness and delusive tenderness of manner, far surpassed everything she had ever seen, or even imagined. She admired him, loved him, worshipped him.

But this admiration and idolatry was the secret of her heart. She had not revealed it even to her friend and second mother, Lady Aylmer; no, nor to her father. There was a

something in the manner of both when speaking of Philip Gorhambury, which chilled her and forbade confidence. She felt persuaded that they did him the greatest injustice; and had for some reason or other taken a prejudice against him; but her consciousness forbade her endeavouring to overcome this prejudice. She said nothing, and her secret was not in the least suspected.

Philip upon his side, had liked Hernana from a child. There was something in the energy and sublimity of her character—her frank and faithful truthfulness, so different from himself, and yet which he loved beyond words, as boys and men of somewhat feeble characters are prone to love the girl or woman upon whom they can lean.

As she grew up, her fine, classical form, her open-spirited, intellectual countenance, called forth his highest admiration. Inferior to him as she was in her social position, he took the greatest pride in her—he never saw her without a feeling of elation. She was such a noble creature! Once or twice he had spoken of her before his mother, and his mother would acknowledge that the form of Hernana was perfect

enough to rival the antique models; but then she would add a few words of contemptuous pity for the narrow education she had received, her deficiency in accomplishments, her ignorance of art, and the oddity and narrowness of Lady Aylmer's ideas—she too who had pretended to form her.

"Really, it is a pity," she said upon one of these occasions, "for Mr. Lovel, though he is only your father's curate, was born a gentleman, I understand, but Hernana is more fit to be a housekeeper than a gentleman's wife. She is not even accomplished enough to take the place of an ordinary governess. Mr. Lovel is very poor, I believe, but what could Lady Aylmer be thinking of! However, she is an odd, obstinate sort of woman — I know that from your father. But, good heavens! Philip, what are you about? Why you are painting your sky apple-green!"

"I took the wrong colour. Somebody has jumbled all the colours together. Everything is topsy-turvy—what a fool!" And he tore the picture he was beginning from the easel, and was about to cast it into the fire.

"Dear Philip, what are you about?" said his mother, "you can easily obliterate your mistake —see! It is done already," added she, passing her experienced brush over the apple-green sky. "This is a beautiful beginning—there the light a little too much broken, perhaps; but really it does you infinite credit upon the whole—your perception of art—"

"Art be d—d!" said he roughly, "I am sick of art and of everything."

His mother stared.

"What can you be thinking of?"

"Sick of it all—of everything! Sometimes, mother, I ask myself what is the use of all this? What purpose in life does it serve, making pretty pictures to hang upon walls, which not one in a hundred looks at, not one in five hundred understands, and not one in ten thousand cares for? It's all very pretty—very pretty; but, oh! how cursed tired of life I sometimes am!"

"That distaste of life," said his mother, quietly, "is the scourge of genius. Who has not felt it, in their moments of discouragement and anxiety? All feel it. There is no escaping

from it. But beauty is not the less beautiful because there are moments when our very sense and perception of it seems dead. The immortal works of Grecian art remain for ever—the endowment and admiration of the universe; though—"

"Though what?" said he, impatiently. "Mother, it's a great humbug, after all. Who is the better for the Apollo or the Laocoon?"

"Nay, if you talk so absurdly as *that*," said she, resuming her pencil, "I can have nothing to say to you."

Of course he believed, as everybody else feels bound to believe, that he was very absurd when he ventured to propound such ideas—ideas, however false, which will present themselves, when life in its intensity presses upon us.

"Well, mother, I beg your pardon for speaking evil of your gods. It's all my own stupidity and ill-humour. But, oh! this Castle! this Castle! it is to me, at times, the very cave of spleen — the den of the demon of *ennui*. There are moments," said he, looking round the room with an air of indescribable

disgust, "when I could take up all these fine things, and make a bonfire of them. That would warm one, at least, for once in one's life."

She continued her painting in dignified silence. Such nonsense was unworthy of a reply.

He sat there some time sullen: ill-temper is apt to take that turn, when it does not get answered. He kept watching her indefatigable pencil, till he lost all patience; at last, he suddenly looked up, with:

"Any commands for G——? I am going to ride over to G——, mother."

"What do you want at G——?" she asked, without lifting up her head. "You cannot be back to-night."

"Oh yes, I shall; and if I am not, don't fret about me. No commands? not a little inch of a ribbon I can get for you?"

"No, no."

"*Addio*, then—*addio*," said he, with a sudden return of spirit and gaiety. "And here, mother of mine, is a kiss upon each cheek; one, to plead my excuse with the

Apollo, the other with the Laocoon. And now that I have jumped up from my chair, I am ready to vow what you will in honour of every hero or deity that ever was chiselled."

She took his kisses coldly, not playfully; but he did not seem to care, for his head was full of new thoughts, as he ran merrily down to the stable-yard.

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. Gorhambury, though he had so completely given up his clerical duties, still kept his living at G——, and resided there a certain portion of every year. So that Philip had always a *pied-à-terre* in the city, where he very often took refuge when he found the solitary Castle in the mountains intolerable. It was indeed placed in a very wild and secluded situation, and almost reminded people of the Castle of Udolpho.

There was the usual solemn and quiet society in G——, which is common to most cathedral towns. But though the dances and parties were never very lively, there was often excellent

music to be had, a peculiarity also common to cathedral towns, where the affairs and interests of the choir keep the subject uppermost in most people's minds.

There were many amateur singers among the gentlemen of the place, who gave the music of the best masses and that of our own old masters, and good living ones too, with excellent effect. Philip had a charming tenor voice; there was something of the tone and pathos of Rubini in his singing; and his assistance was ever most welcome in these agreeable evening concerts. Few indeed could hear him sing without emotion, for he did it with a truth, feeling and simplicity, which made its way direct to the heart, to say nothing of the handsome and expressive countenance, which gave fresh sentiment to the words and tones he uttered. He was a dangerous man among the young ladies of G——, where staid, middle-aged, married men were plenty, but young ones like Philip, rare as the Phœnix. Indeed, the part of Phœnix he might literally be said to play at this time, for there was not one man in the place who could in the least compare with him,

either as regarded personal or mental accomplishments.

Many a young lady sighed in secret, but sighed in vain, for the charming Philip Gorhambury; but not one could flatter herself with being the object even of a preference. There was a gaiety and gallantry—nay, something more—a touch of sentiment about him, which might have flattered and beguiled many a one; only these things were so generally diffused, his attentions so equitably distributed among his favourites, he professed to be so deeply in love with at least half a dozen fair ones at once, that it was impossible for the most obstinate self-delusion to persuade itself that there was anything approaching to real partiality for any one among them. They were consoled, these young ladies, as young ladies and all the world besides are apt to be, by the conviction, that if not fortunate themselves, no one could boast of better luck.

This pleasing idea was, however, a mistaken one, for there *was* one, whom Philip Gorhambury never mentioned, never praised, about whom he never made any of his wild professions of pas-

sion; one who seldom appeared at any evening parties, and when she did so, mostly sat by, disregarded, for she was only a poor curate's daughter, and the belles of the city scarcely condescended to notice her.

Philip rarely spoke to her in public; a ceremonious bow was the usual salute; perhaps a sentence or two might now and then be formally exchanged, that was all. Yet, some way, though no one noticed the coincidence, when she was present, the tones of his sweet and passionate voice were more thrilling, more intensely pathetic than ever, and the lovers of music would wonder at and applaud the sudden inspiration, while she sat retired, like the Egeria of old, shedding her influence, hidden, and unperceived.

But she of old was in a less dangerous situation than poor Hernana, for she dictated, but was not a witness of the effects she produced. She escaped, perhaps heart-free, perhaps not. It was Hernana's fate, however, to sit a silent and entranced listener, to tones which she knew were inspired by and addressed to her alone. One look directed to the corner where she

sat, one expressive, momentary glance, would tell her to whom all this world of beautiful sound was dedicated.

But now he is mounted upon his noble black horse, with shining coat and waving mane and tail, and hoofs that seem almost to scorn the ground; and he is bounding over the hills alone, drinking in the sweet mountain air, his bosom swelling, his intellectual brow dilating with thought and feeling—delicious, as they are high and pure.

He was of that peculiar temperament which responds like the chords of some fine instrument to the harmony which is around him, and his heart constant, affectionate, and true, trembled with happiness as he thought of her to whom all his fond aspirations are devoted.

He has loved her all his life, he loves her still with a true and honest love—for herself. He knows not why—he cares not why—he loves her because she is Hernana.

Hernana is truth, energy, nobility of mind, reason, action. She is all this; but he loves

these things because they are in *her*—not her because she is all this.

He loves her; that is enough. And like the carrier-pigeon needing no compass, by the instinct of *love* steering direct towards home; so Philip Gorhambury bounds over the hills, riding an unconscious steeple-chase, of which Hernana is the goal. He mounts a steep ascent, and then looks down; and below him in the valley lies the town of G——.

The grey towers of the cathedral rise in the midst with the full light of the sun upon them. The various habitations, intermingled with trees, lie there nestling among the hills, the broad majestic river rolling by, the green meadows with their herds and flocks, and hedge-banks, and rows of pollard-willow stretching far upon either side—a wilderness of houses, and trees, and fields, and gardens—how beautiful! He checked his horse, and looked down upon the scene; at first, filled with enthusiasm by the extreme beauty of the picture, and then beginning to endeavour to distinguish well-known objects. The place where he stood commanded almost a bird's-

eye view of the city. He could see the cathedral close, with its rows of elms and oaks, and distinguish the Deanery perfectly well. Then his eye travelled to the denser parts of the city, where thickly crowded houses, narrow lanes, small courts, and all the evidences that these were the tenements of the very poor presented themselves. This district was, however, traversed by one large and wide street of handsome houses, in the midst of which he could, even there, perceive his father's, as more lofty and imposing than any other.

It had tall ornamented chimneys and a high flight of steps, and a door with a Grecian pediment and pillars. He fancied he could see even these.

His father's church-steeple, a noble spire, rose at some little distance, from among this wilderness of squalid dwellings. Near it, his eye searched long.

It was difficult to distinguish the small obscure dwelling he sought—with its garden before and its garden behind—which was situated close by the churchyard. At last he thought he could single out the little green plot by one

particular tree—a poplar tree it was—which rose like a giant not far from the garden-wall. Having settled this point, he seemed satisfied; and dismounting from his horse, prepared to lead him down the steep descent before him.

He reached the bottom of the hill, then he vaulted into his saddle, and plunging among the narrow lanes and courts, made his way to the well-known little gate.

A boy of his acquaintance, son of the sexton, was accustomed to take charge of Philip's horse when he came this way. He now summoned him, and put Alcaster into his care, charging him as he valued his life not to mount himself; and then walked by the side of the brick wall which enclosed Mr. Lovel's little domain, till he came to the narrow high iron gate which closed the entrance to it.

He peeped through. The house Mr. Lovel occupied was the old parsonage; far too inconvenient for the requisites of modern luxury, as the Rector regarded them; and, therefore, it had been given up rent free to the Curate.

It was an old low building of dark brick, with

pointed gables and casement windows, almost overgrown with ivy, pear trees, and creepers of various descriptions, which Hernana had trained up against the walls. It had a small court in front, occupied by a grass plot, which was equally divided by a paved walk running from the gate to the house; behind the house there was a somewhat larger space, occupied also by a grass plot, upon which grew a dwarf cherry tree, two small plantations of some dozen sycamores, laburnums, plane, and lilacs, on either hand; two flower borders, with a gravel walk between, running the whole length of the garden; and, on each side, the ground laid out as a kitchen garden of very slender dimensions.

The back garden was fenced in by privet hedges, cut, and pruned, and trained, till they exceeded the height of a tall man; the front was surrounded by the high wall of dark, coloured brick, of which I have spoken. The tall poplar tree growing outside, cast its shadow over the scene.

It was a somewhat gloomy, yet not altogether unpleasing place; and Philip loved it dearly. There was a charm about the quiet old house,

which belonged not only to the present, but to the past; for he remembered well the wife of a former curate regaling him, a little child, with dainty cakes and rich cream in this very garden, before Hernana and her father had come to live there.

The churchyard, opposite to which the iron gate opened, was quite deserted, and Philip could stand at his leisure and look through unobserved.

He wanted to find out whether Mr. Lovel was at home or not. Much as he liked the daughter, the father was not in the least to his taste. His neglected dress; his dawdling, indifferent manner; the serious, almost severe, character of his virtue; each and all found something in Philip Gorhambury with which it was impossible they could harmonise.

He looked and peered about. The casement of the parlour window was open, and a throstle in a cage was singing and whistling there, evidently quite at its ease, and probably by itself. The window of Mr. Lovel's room above was likewise open, and no one to be seen stirring there either. He put his hand upon the

latch, opened the gate noiselessly, and stole into the garden.

There were no dogs to be apprehended as giving alarm. A cat whisked through the bushes; she was the only inhabitant of the sort, except the throstle. There was not food enough in the *ménage* to provide for such pets, as dogs. So he made his entrance unobserved; and first he went to the parlour window, and looked in, but the parlour was empty. Hernana was not there as usual, writing or sewing. Then he followed the path which led to the back of the house, and upon which the eating-room—for it scarcely merited the name of dining-room—and the kitchen window looked.

The casement of the eating-room was closed; but that of the kitchen was open. To it he stole; and hidden by a flanking white rose-bush, which, with another of rosemary, grew close by, he peeped in.

Cobbett, in one of his wholesome books, execrating the potato as the bane of all domestic industry, and magnifying the good brown loaf, draws a beautiful picture of a fine active

young woman, drawing her bread out of the oven.

But tastes differ. For there are tastes which are simple and wholesome, and tastes which are perverted and vitiated; or as some, on the contrary, would have it, tastes are refined, or tastes are vulgar.

Philip, the elegant child of fortune, and reared to fortune's notions and refinements, peeped into the kitchen; and there he saw —what think you? His dark Spanish beauty; the Hernana of the glorious shape, the large dark eye, the ebon hair; the enchantress, in short, whom he had in fancy attired in mantilla and bugle flowered petticoat, with a shoe so neat and delicate as to set the world on fire when stepping along the Alameda, employed— how?

How was Dulcinea del Toboso employed, when Sancho was sent to her with a message— stringing pearls?

The kitchen was, as always, a perfect Dutch

picture of neatness. The sanded floor, white as snow; the large kitchen table as emulously fair and clean; the little shelves, shining with bright copper vessels, or with rows of old china; where figured sundry strange figures, bowls and jugs, most rare and antique. They had belonged to Hernana's mother, who had been a Spaniard.

The fire blazed cheerfully in the grate. Before it was a low fender, shining like silver, and upon a little square of crimson carpet that here covered the floor, lay a large tabby cat, reposing in all that domestic quiet comfort of which a reposing cat is so perfect a type. By the fire, in an old-fashioned arm-chair, dressed in the primitive style which one now sees no more, with a quilted black petticoat, open gown, snow-white apron, handkerchief quaintly crossed and pinned over her bosom, and a curious construction called a cap, white as swansdown, upon her head her feet resting upon a footstool, sat the old house-keeper, as complete a figure of comfort and repose as the cat herself. Her cheek was pale, and she looked ill; and that accounted for the ever-busy housewife being at rest, whilst

her tasks were performed by another. For there was a kneading-trough resting upon low tressels in the middle of the room, and there, kneading the bread for the family, was Hernana. Her beautiful arms were bare, her sleeves rolled back, her hair somewhat in disorder, a few raven locks escaping over her neck, and her cheek a little flushed. She was kneading away with all her might, little thinking how she looked, and only anxious to save the dear old dependant from fatigue, and make her father some good bread.

Mrs. Alworthy groaned aloud, as she sat there reposing, uttering many a lackaday! and welladay! to which lamentations Hernana, lifting up her head, would answer with a cheerful encouraging smile; and then return to her work, and knead on with the utmost industry.

And there stood the fastidious Philip gazing at her. And as he gazed, his heart was filled with strange emotions. She looked charming! she looked beautiful, even then! and he had it but too strongly impressed upon his heart how far more beautiful she could look at

other times. But there was something in the employment which offended his taste, his false and somewhat tinselly taste. Something in her dress so common!—in the whole scene so vulgar! vulgar!!

Base and most inapplicable word! He was the vulgar one—not she. He, who was insensible to the moral beauty of a magnanimous simplicity — to the loveliness which lies in the detail of domestic life, however humble, when love and generosity are the elements in which it subsists.

And yet, meretricious as were his tastes, it was impossible that the little scene should be without charms for him. The reposing old woman; the beautiful energetical and simple figure of the girl.

There was a witchery in it. Where did the charm lie? Why could he not tear himself away? He thought he disliked the whole thing. It vexed him to see Hernana thus degrading herself; yet, strange contradiction! he loved her more so than ever he had loved her before. He was angry, yet enchanted!

Oh, simple, unconventional life has a rare magic in it!

He stood there, watching her. The old woman groaned, and moved uneasily. Then Hernana wiped the dough hastily from her hands, and flew to her, and shifted a cushion that lay against the back of the chair; and soothed, and comforted, and kissed her, and returned to her occupation again.

He could stand it all no longer. He knocked at the window. She lifted up her head. First the scarlet colour flew to her cheek; and then she seemed ashamed of having been ashamed; and then, stripping the dough from her fair fingers, she laughed merrily, and came to the casement and unclasped it.

"Wonders are never to cease!" said he, half-vexed, yet half-pleased. "I see you have taken up a new trade to-day."

"Yes. Poor dear Mrs. Alworthy, there, is ill with the rheumatism; and bread *must* be had, you know."

"There are bakers in the town, I should think," he said, rather contemptuously.

"But it is cheaper to bake at home."

"Cheaper!"

"Yes, cheaper. I pray you, don't pronounce that word in such a contemptuous manner. It is the most esteemed of qualifications here."

"Yes, I know it; and sometimes, perhaps, regret it. The sordid, in no shape, is lovely—never amiable—seldom right," added he, peevishly.

"Sordid!" she repeated, a little hurt; then added—"A necessary economy is never sordid."

"It is absurd to talk in this way, Hernana. I know your father is not rich, but I also know that numbers of girls whose fathers cannot be better off than yours, would scorn to stoop to these sordid—yes, sordid! I can find no other word to express my ideas—these sordid occupations!"

She looked down for a moment.

What woman, however strong her character, however noble her notions, however high and pure her sentiments, can withstand the humiliation of appearing low and degraded in the eyes of the man she loves?

She may be fully sensible that he is wrong, and that she is right; that he is conventional and vulgar, and herself heroic and high; but she is unamiable in his eyes! and that is enough.

How many an honest duty has been sacrificed at this shrine of a false divinity! How many men with their shallow and tinselly views of female excellence, have given a wrong direction to many a loving heart!

She looked down, to blush, and feel her heart sinking, with a cold mortified sense of being abased in her lover's eyes. But this was not the first time that she had met with mortification where she knew she deserved esteem—and felt that the noble sacrifices made by self only met slight and contempt from men.

The world is made thus. The common sort value us more for what we do for ourselves, than for what we sacrifice to others.

Many a time before had something in Philip's manner, when she had been making some abnegation of this kind, humbling herself to the most lowly tasks, denying herself the most trifling piece of personal adornment, to save a shilling

or two for her father, often and often had his manner, pained and perplexed her, yet she had continued to persevere.

Her heart was of so high and generous a temper that every new pain seemed only to add force to her resolution, and stimulate her to persevere in the path of self-denial which she had chosen for herself.

Yet every recurrence of these little scenes of discontent on the part of Philip, gave her intense pain: she so loved to please him; and so longed for that appreciation upon his part, which she felt to be her due, and which is the sweetest, sweetest recompense upon this earth, to a woman—the assurance the he she loves, at least does her justice.

"I think," she said, lifting up her eyes, and looking at him with that grave serenity and strength, which he felt so irresistibly charming, "that you are unjust, Philip, when you call these things sordid in me; sordid seems to me to mean a love of sparing for sparing's sake—a love of money for money's sake, and the accumulation of it by paltry means; a love of low employments, because incapable of taking plea-

sure in higher. Does that cap fit me, or mine, Philip?"

"No, certainly; and it is because you are capable of what is higher, that it angers me to see in you a sort of strange perversity—for I repeat it—I never see other young ladies kneading bread. Look at your fists," said he, half-laughing, and still half-vexed, "are they fit for a drawing-room? A labourer's cottage, say, rather."

She held them up.

"I don't see much harm done as yet," she said, with simplicity.

"As yet! No, perhaps not, as yet! But how long is this to go on? And how do you think Molly the cook, and Betty the housemaid, get their coarse, red paws, but by doing just as you do? I am sure, Hernana, if my mother were once to see you, as I see you now, it would disgust her for ever."

"I should be sorry to disgust any one; most of all a woman of Mrs. Gorhambury's fine taste; yet to gratify taste we do not altogether live. —we must not altogether live. There is a line in the Catechism, Philip; it served me as a child,

and it serves me still—'to do my duty in that state into which it hath pleased God to call me.'"

"Pooh, nonsense! This line may be used as you use it, to justify any eccentricity. We shall have you talking of the rights of women next, I suppose."

"I don't think making bread was ever considered an undue exercise of the rights of women. Come, Philip, don't be cross; don't be vexed with me for doing that which you know I ought to do. Forgive me if I offend your taste, dear Philip, and do me the justice to believe it is no love of eccentricity, but a sincere desire to do my duty unswervingly, just as it comes. And," in a lower voice, "the poor thing is in such pain, I cannot let her do anything herself; and really we cannot afford to keep another servant, except for the very roughest work. Kneading the bread is so cleanly and so nice, you should not object to that, you know."

It was such a sweet, fervent, persuasive voice; it would have rived, to use the old proverb, a heart out of a stone. It was all-powerful with him. He thought she looked

so majestic in her simplicity, so gentle in her self-assertion and dignity.

He leaned against the window-sill and continued to look into the room. The evening was closing fast, and as the shadows deepened outside, the cheerful brightness of the little apartment became all the brighter, the fire throwing up its flickering blaze and flashing upon the coppers and china. He felt in his poet's soul, that which all poets feel, the invincible charm of nature.

"You look very comfortable here," said he.

Her countenance brightened, there was quite an effulgence upon it when she was happy.

"You think so. *I* think so. There is something in a little quiet kitchen like this, which has great delights for me. I am luckily different from people in general, I believe; I really like these little comfortable places; I think if I lived in a great wilderness of a palace I should be lost. Sometimes at the Deanery it seems almost a labour to get from one end of those two large drawing-rooms to the other. If they are not filled, they look desolate; and if they are filled, what a crowd it is! One

or two friends, over a nice, cosy, blazing fire like that; is it not comfortable?"

Philip said nothing. Her countenance was so speaking, so animated whilst she said this—the scene so exactly as she described it, there in all its peace and comfort before him. He could almost have wished his fate had consigned him to the same simple life she seemed to love, that necessity had forced him down to such a sphere, with her by his side. But necessity had done no such thing.

We cannot voluntarily degrade. He felt that. The more easy solution of the question, which in some form or other was now almost always uppermost in his thoughts, was to elevate her to the place by his side. For without her by his side, what was life? But then what would his mother say?

CHAPTER V.

But now the door of the little kitchen opened, and Mr. Lovel made his appearance. He had been hard at work that day, among the very lowest of his parishioners; he was excessively tired, his shoes and his gaiters were bespattered with mud, his hat was more worn, and his whole appearance more slovenly, not to say beggarly, than ever.

Philip looked at him with unmixed disgust. He was dirty, positively dirty! shabby, mean, eccentric! What an absurd contempt he indulged in for all the proprieties men are accustomed to respect.

It angered Philip to see Hernana turn

round, fly to her shabby-looking, and, as he thought, disgusting father, clasp him fondly in her arms, and imprint a kiss upon each cheek, exclaiming :

"Dear, dear papa! how tired you do look! and no bread baked for your supper! What have I been about? Only stay a moment, and I will fetch you a loaf from the baker's; but sit down first," and she put him into a chair by the fire, and then kneeled down and began to unbutton his gaiters, and offer to take off his dirty shoes.

"Oh, Miss Hernana, let me do that!" cried Mrs. Alworthy, offering to move.

"Be quiet, will you? and sit still! Dear, dear papa! how tired you do look!"

She, kneeling down and handling those bemired shoes and gaiters! This was to make bad worse with a vengeance. He drew back from the window disgusted. But it was soon to return again, He was bewitched! she had thrown a spell upon him! Do what she would —disgust, displease—she was Hernana still!

Mr. Lovel *did* seem extremely faint and tired. He sank back in the arm-chair in which

she had placed him; his colour faded; a wan blueness spread over his temples; he looked so wretchedly ill, that even the hard heart of pride and fastidiousness was touched.

Philip looked at him with some interest. She stood there gazing at her father, with a face in which love, reverence, tenderness, and anxiety were blended. Then she suddenly snatched up her bonnet, which lay upon a table near, and prepared to leave the house.

Philip was at the door before her, and met her there.

"You are not going out alone at this time of the evening?"

"Yes I must, do come with me; see how ill he is. He went out but poorly this morning—but what can keep him from his duty? The fever is about, and there are many, many—oh, so sick! and miserable! But he must have brandy now; he has been all day in those fever holes. Oh, how could I be so forgetful!"

She hurried on, Philip following in silence.

She came to the next public-house and entered without a moment's hesitation.

Philip's feelings are indescribable as he stood

at the door, not going in, but looking in, and seeing this angel of light and purity invested with a panoply, as it were, of virtue, entering this den of dirt and depravity, where two or three brutal fellows were laughing, smoking, and drinking. She hastily asked for some brandy, paid for it, and flew back to her father.

Rapidly she seemed to flit, rather than run along the streets; he following, but she did not appear to remember him. She was only thinking of her father. She opened the door of the house, and went in—Philip following; but he stood at the door of the little kitchen, as he had done at that of the gin-shop, not entering, but looking in; whilst she flew forward, quickly prepared a little brandy-and-water, and presented it to the pale lips of Mr. Lovel.

"Brandy!—no, my dear!" he said, drawing back and shaking his head.

"You must—you must! I was told so yesterday by the medical man at Lady Aylmer's—oh, how could I be so careless!"—she said, "when you came back, faint and sick, from those dens of misery and pestilence, that the

best thing to preserve you from the fever, was a little hot brandy-and-water. Take it—take it, dear, dear papa!"

He took a little, though unwillingly, and said he perhaps should be the better for it.

"I feel ill," he added.

The old lady had risen from her chair and had hobbled up to her master as well as her stiffened limbs would permit.

"Yes, I am sure, Mr. Lovel—my dear master, you are ill: you have taken the fever. Oh, lack-aday! lackaday!"

"No, I hope not—I trust in God, not!" cried Hernana.

The young man still kept standing at the door, offering no assistance, engaged in watching the scene; it excited in him such strange, contradictory feelings.

He could not be insensible to its moral beauty; for Philip, whatever else he might be, was poet enough to have much moral taste. And yet, at the very time that he admired her piety so much, there was a something displeasing to his pride, and false, fastidious refinement in the whole.

He had at times indulged himself in the romance of dreaming of Hernana his wife. But to take a wife is, with men of his stamp, a very serious matter indeed. They have not heart enough to invest the idea with all its world of tender sympathies. With him, affection was a matter more of the imagination than of the feelings. He was at sad division with himself; sometimes he would, sometimes he would not; just as his fancy veered about. It never once suggested itself to his mind, that by this indulgence of his wayward temper, he might be trifling with the happiness of another. What he felt he expressed; and when he felt nothing he kept away. She only saw him when under the influence of tender sentiments; it is not to be wondered at, therefore, that she believed he loved her sincerely. He always was loving her when she saw him. She had no standard to measure the depth and breadth of his affection but that of her own heart, and her heart was all singleness and fidelity. How could she then distrust his?

She never thought of such a thing! That

Philip loved her she felt convinced; and now, whilst hanging anxiously over her father, she lifted up her head, and looking round, her eye caught the figure of Philip standing upon the threshold, a sudden rush of joy, oh, so exquisite! gushed to her heart. He was there! and his love and sympathy, made even that moment of anxiety like heaven.

She cast her eyes wistfully towards him. He could not resist the appeal; his heart was at that moment what it should ever have been.

He crossed the threshold, and with that tenderness in his countenance, which his features were but too well formed to express, said:

"Can I be of any use to you, dear Hernana?"

"He is very ill; you see he is very ill," she said, in much distress. "What is to be done?"

As she spoke, her father's countenance changed suddenly for the worse. In spite of all his efforts to keep up, and assure her that nothing was the matter with him, a livid pale-

ness spread over his face, his eyes closed, and he fell back in his chair, shivering violently in every limb.

"You must have advice instantly," cried Philip. "Something is very much amiss here. Let me run for advice. Who shall I call in?"

"Our apothecary is old Mr. Singleton; oh, go, go—run, run, dear Philip! He is very ill. Worse, worse! Oh, papa—papa! father —father!"

Philip waited not for a word more; but flew to fetch the apothecary, Mr. Singleton. He rushed down the street, and into that gentleman's small, and somewhat obscure shop; for Mr. Singleton was a general practitioner in a humble way, and his practice lay principally among the poor. He was not the less, however, a skilful and experienced man; or rather a man who knew how to profit by experience—for experience offers herself to every one; the difference between man and man is, that whilst one gathers ingots of gold from the mingled sands as they run, another distinguishes, discerns, and appropriates nothing. This by the way. Philip

hurried into the little shop, where a young man was standing behind the counter employed in preparing medicine. He looked surprised to see so fashionable and distinguished a young gentleman entering Mr. Singleton's door; and was beginning in the politest fashion he could invent, to inquire his errand. But—

"Is Mr. Singleton at home?" asked Philip, hastily.

"Yes, Sir, just come in; but he has been out since five o'clock this morning, and is sitting down to his tea. Anything I could have the pleasure of doing?"

"I want Mr. Singleton. Is this the way?"

And without waiting for permission, Philip entered a passage at the back of the shop, and opening a door, found himself in the parlour of the apothecary.

He was a small, singular-looking man; but with a countenance of remarkable acuteness. Poor man, he had just taken off his miry boots, after a journey of ten or twelve hours; and was enjoying the rest of his arm-chair, a comfortable cup of tea, a round of buttered toast, and his newspaper.

"Mr. Singleton!"

"At your service. I have not had the pleasure—Ay, ay, ay! I beg your pardon, Mr. Philip Gorhambury. In what can I assist you, Sir?"

"Oh, pooh! It's not for myself; a patient—"

"Oh, dear! oh, deary me! can't the patient wait a little? I am but just come in; I *must* have at least an hour's rest. Nature requires—I will be with the patient in three quarters of an hour."

"That won't do; you must come directly. Mr. Lovel has had a strange sort of seizure, and is—"

"Mr. Lovel is it?" starting up, and huddling on his great coat. "Mr. Lovel ill! Ay, ay! I knew but too well what it would all end in. The blessed saint and martyr! Got the fever! Ay! I'll lay a hundred pound to a shilling. Got the fever!"

He hurried into his shop, his great coat unbuttoned, and all abroad; and having quickly filled a bottle with some medicine, hastened

with rapid steps down the street, Philip following him as fast as he could.

Mr. Singleton entered the kitchen, attended by Philip, but the little chamber was now empty. Even poor crippled Mrs. Alworthy had found her way up-stairs.

The stairs opened into a passage close by the kitchen-door.

Mr. Singleton went to the foot, and called :

" Miss Hernana !"

She flew down to meet him.

Her face was flushed, and tears were upon it ; her manner all distraction and confusion.

" Oh, you are come ! Oh, thank you ! bless you ! He is very ill. What can it be ?"

So the anxious, hurried, trembling voice was heard running on, whilst the old apothecary blundered as well as he could up the steep staircase, and soon his heavy footsteps were heard in the apartment above.

Philip remained standing by the kitchen fire, looking into the red embers, and in a deep reverie.

The picture of humble life before him was so unpleasant, so discordant, so inharmonious with all his ideas; and yet with a strange pertinacity, still the image of Hernana rested there, rested as something without which life, the world, all his advantages, and all his possessions, would be utterly nought and valueless.

He loved her; he felt, he knew that he loved her.

Something within him whispered that his love was a just, a generous, an ennobling love. That his preference was wise, was well-placed, was praiseworthy; that under its influence he should be a better man—should be a worthier, nobler human being; a happy man too—happy from the best and surest sources of happiness.

But then the picture had its reverse.

The reverse was made up of a host of insignificant nothings—vain trifles, which, to his false and fastidious taste, and enfeebled character, assumed a most unreasonable importance. A host of ideas, which one moment's serious appreciation of their true relative value, would have reduced to their just insignificance, kept

painfully crowding into his mind; assailing him in the weakest part, and endeavouring, as in the old legend of the life's choice, to obscure by their meretricious glare, the grave but sublime attributes of the higher one.

Strange it is, but so it is. Even when men love deeply and sincerely — even when every inclination of the heart is prompting them, when they would gladly, thankfully accept the impulse from another, they want courage, manliness, and virtue to make the better choice for themselves. It requires a certain, nay, a very considerable amount of virtue, to dare to abide by a worthy choice, and do what would be the wisest thing in the world, and which our hearts are yearning to do, when the idle voice of habit, worldly considerations, and the common course of things, are much opposed to it.

Oh! how much happiness do men hourly throw away because they have not the courage to seek it, where alone they can find it, in the unbiassed dictates of their own hearts.

Philip Gorhambury stood by that fire, gazing into those embers, divided between the sweetness of a generous well-placed love, and ten

thousand vain, weak, trifling causes for doubt and irresolution.

His mother too! What would his mother say? What would she think of it? His thoughts glanced towards his father. He would be terribly disappointed, and would be dreadfully angry, but that he cared little for and could defy.

But his mother! his clever, talented, elegant, accomplished mother! Her contempt! How could he brook her contempt?

The utter scorn and pity with which he knew she would regard anything approaching to the generous romance of life; to that brave independence of the world's opinion in matters with which the world has no business to interfere. It was not the disappointment that she would feel, the pain he must necessarily inflict upon his mother that he troubled himself about; but her contemptuous pity! her forbearance! her blighting compassion! her indignant and unfeigned astonishment at his taste.

You see how much of a heart Philip Gorhambury possessed, or rather how far his education had tended to extinguish or to deve-

lope what good feeling nature had bestowed upon him. So he stood at the fire, in a reverie, till Mr. Singleton was heard slowly descending the stairs, and he made his appearance in the kitchen, followed by Hernana.

Her hair was all in disorder, falling in fine picturesque masses about a face to which the emotions of her heart had given the noblest and most interesting expression. Intense feeling in some countenances produces this beautiful effect. This was eminently the case with that of Hernana.

The imaginative eye of Philip was struck almost with wonder, at the extraordinary beauty of the face and figure of her—who, little conscious of the effect she was producing, and far too much in earnest to think at that moment even of her lover—was in broken sentences anxiously inquiring from Mr. Singleton as to her father's condition.

The old man could give her little satisfaction. He could only exhort the young lady to firmness and fortitude; whilst she, almost heart-broken, drew from him the confession, that her father's illness had assumed a most threatening

aspect, and in short, that his life was in danger. Then she was at last overcome, and the grief which burst forth was so natural and so deep, the feelings so tender and strong, which seemed for the moment to overwhelm her, that they forced their way to the sympathies of her lover, and completely vanquished him; but some fine scene in a tragedy would have done as much.

She had sunk down upon the little bench by the kitchen fire as soon as Mr. Singleton had taken his departure, and had abandoned herself for the moment to all the agonies of despair. He could resist it no longer; all that was really good in him was aroused, he went to her, sat down by her side, took her hand, and as he tenderly pressed it, spoke, in those tones of manly tenderness and strength so dear to a woman's heart, and entreated her to take comfort.

"Dear, dear Hernana! Don't give way so! Don't abandon yourself to despair! The doctor told you there was hope."

She shook her head.

"Yes, he did indeed. And now, my love, compose yourself; listen to me; let us see what

can be done, sweetest Hernana," and the other hand was made prisoner as he spoke. "You know you can command me; have no scruples—do we not understand each other? I have the means; you will not refuse to use them? Everything I possess is yours to employ. These fevers yield to proper treatment. What shall we do first? Have you confidence in Mr. Singleton, or shall I call in other advice? A nurse? Yes, you shall instantly have a nurse. Good wine? I heard Mr. Singleton say something of cordials—of keeping up? My father has excellent Madeira—or perhaps claret—I think I have heard claret recommended. Anything—everything—only tell me what shall be done first?"

So he ran rapidly on; holding her two hands grasped in his, speaking in such a pitiful, earnest, feeling voice.

For a moment—it was a human, it was a woman's weakness, forgive it—every source of apprehension for her father was drowned in a flood of rapturous joy. She looked up at him, their eyes met. His were all fervent passion; hers—Oh, the depths of feeling that he read

there! It was but the infirmity of a moment upon her part, however; she withdrew her hands, and endeavouring to recover the mastery over herself and to calm the beatings of her heart, said: "Oh, thank you! thank you, Philip! What is there I would not accept for my father from you?"

And he thought as she said so, there was that in her face, that in her form, that in the tones of her voice, that never woman had equalled, and that he loved her as never man loved woman before. And he was happy, happy beyond expression!

It took little time to settle between them what was best to be done. Philip proposed, as the first measure, to send his father's physician. This she refused, her confidence in Mr. Singleton was entire; but she accepted with thankfulness his next proposal, which was to find out a sick-nurse, and dispatch her to Hernana's assistance, for of this experienced help, she felt herself to be greatly in need.

Then Philip proposed wines, and various dainties; but these, she said, were not wanted at present; but he thought to himself that

she might want them, and said so at last, conjuring her to remember her own health, and take care of herself, in accents which, though he did not exactly say so in words, expressed, that the happiness of another was concerned in her preservation. And thus persuaded, oh, with what an inward sense of joy, did she promise to do what she could, and to take the wine he said he would send her, or anything else that Mr. Singleton recommended.

And still he kept dawdling and talking, and had something more to say; whilst she began to feel that she was doing wrong; that she was selfish; that she ought to be with her father—to think of nothing but her father.

At last, he went away, and she returned to the sick bed up-stairs. Oh, what a different being from the one who had left it but ten minutes before! Treading on air! her whole being changed—strengthened, brightened, ennobled! It was as if the very atmosphere of existence was altered; its first conditions enhanced; new powers, new energies, new life, new joys! and oh, with it all, such ge-

nerous, generous feelings! such a warm swell of gratitude! such a noble impulse to expend all these new powers in the production of good —to diffuse and expend the happiness enjoyed, till it should warm every living being in the creation of God! Such energy for duty! such power of endurance! such lofty disregard of self, even when existence was become so inestimably precious!

Oh, this is a glorious passage of a woman's life! the first rapture, the first pure ecstasy of love!

CHAPTER VI.

Philip did not leave town, as he had intended, to rejoin his mother. Under the influence of the feelings which now entirely possessed him, he felt it impossible to quit the spot where Hernana was. All his best feelings were aroused; his love seemed to bring with it something which aroused all that was excellent in his character.

He walked down the streets of G——, towards the large and lofty house which his father occupied, engaged in ruminations wholesome and good. He was contrasting his mother's view of life, with that presented by Hernana; her simple devotion to the useful and the

requisite, her unaffected obedience to the calls of affection and duty, with a life of devotion to art; and found in it a something wholesome and strengthening to the soul, in comparison with which the empty aims of the artist, be they the pursuit of the very highest forms of beauty, sank into insignificance.

What a vain, unsubstantial phantom, was this *beautiful*, when brought into comparison with the *good!*

In this his present mood, even the circumstances surrounding Hernana, which had been most unpleasing to his taste, assumed a different aspect. But, artist still in this, it was as if the charms of some lovely home scene, by Gainsborough or Collins, was contrasted with a Claude or a Poussin.

The very familiarity of the subject, the ease and tenderness of its daily aspect, gave an interest to the details never felt before.

That little kitchen! The old lady in the high-backed chair, the dosing tortoise-shell cat, the brightly blazing fire, the flashing light reflected from the shelves, with their copper pots and pans; the snow-white sanded floor,

the kettle humming its sleepy song, the fair, creature with her dark feeling eyes, and her sable braids of hair, kneading at the bread-tub.

An hour or so ago he had not known whether to be most pleased or offended at the sight; but he had gone an age in love since then. He was fairly launched in the enchanted land, where everything takes for its true form—the prevailing glory.

So Philip Gorhambury walked, and so he mused, as we might fancy Tennyson doing, before the composition of one of his lovely, poetic pictures of ordinary everyday life. And his thoughts began to take words, and then to arrange themselves into rhythm, and into regular verses; so that when he reached the Rectory, the first thing he did was to turn into the library, where pen and ink stood ever ready, and to sit down and pen—not the following lines, for I spare you them; though I almost wish I had them by heart, which I have not, to show you how charmingly, very ordinary scenes may present themselves to the truly poetic spirit. The lines might have been an

example and a warning; the very enthusiasm for the picturesque, displayed in them, might have led to some fear, how it actually was with the heart.

This, at least I fear, must be confessed, that Philip's dreams for the present, were of the present. The interest of the moment absorbed him. He looked not forward; and the sweet future of wife and home, so endearing when once entertained by man's imagination, if they presented themselves at all, loomed most indistinctly in the distance.

Hernana, on the other hand, like most other girls of her age, estimated the nature and strength of her lover's feelings, by the honesty and simplicity of her own. Women are so sincere in their attachments, when once attached—so truly devoted—their love is so completely their life, a thing to which every worldly, or interested consideration, is at once offered up without a thought—that they cannot understand how, too often, it is with men. How they can love and not love. Display, and that without insincerity, that which they at the moment honestly feel—namely, a vast deal of real attachment,

and yet leave undone that which is in their power at any moment to do—secure the object of their passion, and stamp the future happiness of life, by the irrevocable word which makes of two, one.

The dawdling, the uncertainty, the hesitations of men, are a source of great and unintelligible misery to the sincere hearts of women: they cannot resist the evidence of, and find it vain to attempt to disbelieve in, the existence of a passion which they every day expect will confirm its reality by words—words that never, never come! till hope and love languish and die—a long, dreary death of suffering.

Hernana sat by her father's bedside, watching him anxiously, but with a heart, so far as her own prospects were concerned, overflowing with happiness. She had believed, she had hoped in Philip's attachment before; but now she felt assured of it. He loved her! And if he loved her, what should prevent their being happy?

Lady Aylmer came the next morning, immediately upon hearing of Mr. Lovel's illness, to visit Hernana, and offer every assistance in her power.

She opened the door of the house, and entered the parlour. It was empty, so she made her way to the kitchen; and there they were. Hernana, as it would appear, had been making a little gruel for her father, and was preparing to pour it through a sieve and strain it into a small china basin. And who should be holding the sieve whilst she lifted up her saucepan with both hands? Who, but Philip Gorhambury!

Lady Aylmer started back with surprise. The kitchen-door stood open, so that her approach not having been perceived, the little scene was presented in all its simplicity.

She stood like one stupified with astonishment, and something of sadness and anxiety, expressed in her face. Philip was holding the sieve carefully in both hands, and he smiled upon Hernana with so much sweetness, as she lifted up the saucepan, and endeavoured to pour the gruel steadily in, and there was

such a pretty exchange of little laughs, and then such a look of tenderness upon his part, and such a sudden glow of rapture over her whole countenance!

Lady Aylmer sighed, and for a moment turned away her head. This was a very painful sight to her. Painful—most painful, that Hernana should love Philip! but far more painful that Philip should seem to love Hernana! For Lady Aylmer knew, or thought she knew, the world. Her prejudices against the whole family of the Gorhamburys were strong, and the suspicion and ill-opinion which attached to the father, she had extended to the wife and to the son. They were people she had never liked in her happier days. Their views of life, and ways of proceeding, were in contradiction to all her ideas. She thought them worldly, cold and calculating; and that the talents with which both mother and son unquestionably were endowed, only served to increase their faults.

It grieved her to think that such a heart as Hernana's—a heart so noble and so precious—should be bestowed, as many, many,

another heart she had seen bestowed, upon one quite incapable of estimating its value. If he loved her—which he must, or why was he here? —it would be through his fancy, rather than his heart, even granting that he had one.

After the exchange of a few more affectionate looks and pleasant words between them, Hernana took her basin and went up stairs; and then he laid down his sieve and sighed, as young men in love do, they don't know why, and he went and sat down upon the settle by the fire, and leaned his head upon his hand and sighed again—sighed like a furnace, if there were any good in that.

Lady Aylmer hesitated whether to advance or retreat. She did not and could not like Philip Gorhambury; but that seemed no reason for absolute avoidance, and it would look odd to go into the cold parlour without a fire, after a walk when a sharp easterly wind was blowing, merely to avoid meeting him. So Lady Aylmer entered the kitchen.

They knew each other by sight, though they had rarely spoken, and Lady Aylmer's story

was well known to Philip, as was the interest she had shown Hernana. We have found his mother, in her way, alluding to it.

He started from his reverie upon hearing a footstep: and perceiving who it was, rose hastily and came forward with a respect and politeness in his air, which was to her as unexpected as it was pleasing, offering her a seat by the fire, and saying something of the coldness of the wind.

She looked at him—hesitated for a moment whether to accept a civility from his father's son; but the courtesy of his manner prevailed, she could not resist it; so she took the seat by the fire he presented, and to her astonishment, found herself sitting there, with the son of Mr. Gorhambury by her side.

She looked at *his* son! the son of him, whom she still in secret believed had, in some mysterious manner, a concern in the loss of her own. The firm belief that her son still existed, and would sooner or later reappear, neither time nor reflection could impair; and she had an undefined sense, of injustice done, a feeling, almost

as if Mr. Gorhambury, by forcing himself into possession, had actually prevented that re-appearance, on which her aching heart was ever dwelling, with a sort of restless, passionate, impatience.

Strange and bitter then, were those feelings with which she looked upon this fair and handsome young man, now occupying her son's place, and contrasted with agony, the fate of her own child, exposed to all the evil chances of degradation and obscurity. Her pale and beautiful countenance, assumed the dark expression of grief amounting to despair. She turned her head away and covered her face with her hand.

He was so beautiful! Such a fine young creature! So full of life and manliness! Such a picture of youth in its strength and glory! And such might her son have been—perhaps was!—perhaps was! but where? oh, where? And this one, was standing in his place.

Philip was shocked at her emotion, the cause of which he did not comprehend; he knew, however, that Lady Aylmer and his father were not upon speaking terms, and had usually heard

it attributed, to her evil temper and jealous pertinacity. Still the greatness of her fall, and the extent of her misfortunes, had excited in him many feelings of pity and interest; and the strange character of her beauty—ghostly beauty, as it might be called, for since that fatal period her cheek had never recovered the slightest colour—interested and touched him; so he endeavoured, by every means in his power, to overcome the disagreeable awkwardness of the situation, in which they both felt themselves.

He addressed the lady in the gentlest and most respectful manner, and though the question was merely as to whether she would let him disencumber her of her heavy cloak or not, the manner of it was almost irresistible.

Insensibly, Lady Aylmer felt her aversion subdued, by the charm of Philip Gorhambury's manner, and suffered herself to slide into conversation with him.

They talked of various things; of the news of the day; of art and literature; in all which matters, Philip showed himself a very competent and accomplished converser. He spoke of Mr.

Lovel with much feeling, but not one word about his daughter; an omission, which Lady Aylmer failed not to notice.

Presently Hernana appeared. She had been detained by her father's bedside, and came in apologizing for the delay. Lady Aylmer observed the heightened colour, the hesitating words, the anxious look upon both sides; and again she fixed her eyes enquiringly upon Philip.

There was not a doubt of the sincerity of his emotions, as betrayed by the sudden glow that spread over his countenance, as the fair girl entered; and the manner, half-confused, half-delighted, with which he performed some trifling service for her.

"How is your father, my dear? I am happy to hear he has had a better night," said Lady Aylmer.

"He is very much better, thank you, Madam. My mind is set at rest as regards present danger; but—"

"But what, my love?"

"There seems reason to fear"—and turning to Philip: "The physician you were so kind as to send this morning, appears to be of opinion,

that it will be a long time before my father will be able to resume his duties, and that change of scene and air, so soon as he can bear removal, will be absolutely necessary."

"Does he say so?" cried Philip, with a look of anxiety; "and where does he talk of sending you?"

"We are not got quite so far as that," she answered, with a faint smile. "There is no hope of my father quitting his bed, for some weeks."

"Will he see me?" asked Lady Aylmer; "and can I not be of use to you, my dear? My experience beside a sick bed has been long and painful. It has made me a good nurse. You must let me assist you, Hernana, in the care of your valued father — and my best friend," she added.

Hernana's answer was a look full of gratitude.

"And I!" cried Philip: "what can I do?"

The course of a love passage like this in which Hernana was engaged, would be tedious and uninteresting to follow. There were in it no events, except those minute ones, which lovers survey through magnifying glasses. No paroxysms of passion, no conversations full of interest and tenderness; for, to tell the truth, though everything between them proceeded as if they thoroughly understood each other—which for the time they did—no express declaration of his passion, had ever yet passed Philip Gorhambury's lips.

Everything, that love the most devoted could look, or do, was looked and done. Everything, save the one final irrevocable sentence. Everything, but the declaration in words that he loved her, and the demand in words, asking her for his wife.

She was satisfied without this. Indeed, she felt under the present circumstances, when it would have been impossible to appeal to her father, that there was delicacy and propriety in Philip Gorhambury's conduct; and his attachment was too unequivocally displayed, in every

manner by which attachment can be displayed, for her to feel any of those cruel alternations of hope and fear, by which many a girl's heart is worn out, and her health and spirits destroyed. She was as certain of her lover's truth and constancy, as of her own.

Lady Aylmer, who knew more of human nature, and was, as we know, not prejudiced in favour of the young lover, was not so well contented. She could not help wishing that something definite should pass. *She* could not help looking with doubt and distrust upon an attachment, where there were so many obstacles of pride and interest to overcome. Yet Philip Gorhambury put so little restraint upon his feelings, seemed so indifferent in displaying his devotion in her presence, that she felt it was almost injurious to doubt his sincerity. Doubt it, however, she could not help doing.

"Mr. Philip Gorhambury seems very assiduous in his attentions to your father," she said one day to Hernana. "I think it is very amiable of him. Few sons of rectors, think themselves under any obligation, to look after the comforts of their fathers' curates."

"Philip *is* very amiable—oh, so amiable!" sighed Hernana.

"A little too amiable for some of us, perhaps, Hernana."

"Perhaps so. I don't know—sometimes I think—"

"What do you sometimes think?"

"How dangerous it must be, in a world so changeful as this, to love any one too entirely."

"I quite agree with you, my love: we ought not. It is madness to build up idols in our hearts. So much may happen—such fearful changes and losses! But it is sometimes still more dangerous if we keep them."

"I don't quite understand, Madam."

They were sitting in the little kitchen, the fire blazing cheerily, darkness creeping on. It was black night behind the casement window; but the fitfully blazing fire kept up an ever changing and ever cheering light within. It was a moment of peace, such as opens the heart to confidence.

In such moments, Hernana's spirit would overflow with excessive happiness and joy:

soothed by the tranquil cheerfulness around, and, as it were, at leisure to enjoy the secret felicity she possessed.

"My love, there is no human being that it is safe to make an idol of."

"No, I suppose not; indeed, I believe it would be very wrong. It would be a form of idolatry, as you say; but I don't know what case that exactly applies to just now."

"Do you not? Nay, then—"

"If you mean," said Hernana, looking up, "that I make an idol of Philip Gorhambury, indeed you are mistaken. I have had an affection for him since he was a boy; I honour all his fine and noble qualities, but I make no idol of him, for idolatry is the worship of what is false, and I worship in him what is true."

"Heaven grant it prove so," Lady Aylmer ejaculated, but not aloud.

She was silent a little time; then she said:

"And how long do you mean to go on worshipping thus?"

"As long as I live, if he deserve it."

"And what is this worship to end in at last?"

Hernana coloured; but made no answer.

"Has *he* ever put that question to you?"

"He! how should he? Dear Lady Aylmer, I will not pretend to misunderstand what you mean; but how could he? How dare he, just now? My father so ill! Orphan of a mother!—quite alone but for you!"

"And am I not your mother?"

"Yes; more than mother; but not, not—just, perhaps, to him."

"And—forgive me if I am indiscreet, dear girl, but allow for a tender friend's anxiety—has he never said anything; remotely hinted at least —"

"Oh! hundreds and hundreds of times!"

"Unequivocally; so that there could be no mistake?"

"What can you mean, dear Lady Aylmer? If you mean to ask whether he has declared himself in express terms—no; he has not, he could not; but oh, if all the eloquence of

looks and broken words be anything, he has expressed his opinion in every possible way! I should be an unworthy, jealous creature to doubt him after what has passed."

Her faith was so serene and unhesitating; her confidence in his faith so complete; she looked so calmly, so confidingly happy, that Lady Aylmer could have hated herself for her own suspicions. She would have given anything to share in the young girl's assurance; but something within forbade it. She loved not these Gorhamburys. Why could not Philip speak out? Commit himself to *her* at least; do the generous thing—the truly, the only generous thing for man to do in such cases—commit himself, bind himself to the woman who loves him.

But this he never did. Time slipped on; and the tedious illness of Mr. Lovel at last terminated; but still nothing had been said that could irrevocably commit a man of honour—that is to say, in the common sense in which the word is usually applied to affairs of this description.

The illness of Mr. Lovel terminated, as the

physician had foretold, in a languishing state of weakness, for which change of scene and air were reckoned indispensably necessary. It was proposed that he should go to Penzance, accompanied by his daughter and Lady Aylmer, who felt as if life would be insupportable, if left to herself, and deprived of the constant comfort and interest of their society; she therefore prepared to accompany them, knowing, likewise, that her doing so would much diminish the expense which must, in any case, prove a heavy drain upon Mr. Lovel's purse.

The proposal was accepted with gratitude and delight, by both father and daughter, and preparations began to be made, for their speedily setting out upon their journey. They were to be absent six months: the whole, in fact, of the winter, the later autumn, and early spring months, it being thought desirable to keep Mr. Lovel in the warm temperature of Cornwall during that period.

And now Mr. Lovel was down stairs again, and in an arm-chair by the parlour fire; but he was wan and feeble, a quite changed man;

all his ancient spirit and energy gone, the mere shadow of his former self. The medical men, however, assured his anxious daughter, that this extreme feebleness was only the usual consequence of such an illness as his had been; and that she would find the effects of the contemplated change of air almost miraculous.

Ill, however, as he was, he was down stairs. She was again under his protection; he was enabled to see his more intimate friends, and Philip Gorhambury, of course. And now the time was come, when every objection to a full and unequivocal declaration of his feelings, was done away. Every day, Hernana believed that something definite would be said, for she could not think it possible that she should be suffered to depart for six months in a state of uncertainty, now beginning to become very painful.

Philip, on his side, seemed conscious, that since Mr. Lovel had come down stairs, his position, as regarded Hernana, was changed, and his manner altered with it. Expressions of devotion disappeared; he became absent, and thoughtful, often embarrassed and ill at ease; it

seemed as if every time he entered the house, he came with a resolution to say something, which yet never was said. And why?

CHAPTER VII.

Mrs. Gorhambury and her son sat together. They often sat so, talking confidentially, for they were very sincerely attached to each other—in their own peculiar way, be it understood, for their attachment was built up of a good deal of self-esteem, extended, as it were, to each other, as is often seen in characters of this egotistical sort. Such ones really can extend their self-love to their own near relations; this said self-love being often the strongest tie that exists between them.

Philip had instinctively kept the secret of his love for Hernana Lovel, as much as possible from his mother, and had to a considerable degree succeeded; but that lady was too clever

and sharp-sighted to be altogether blinded as to this matter; and though, not aware of the full extent to which Philip's affections were engaged, was upon the watch for every opportunity of meeting and warding off the danger that threatened him. To divert the course of his thoughts and affections, by unremitting endeavours, and yet by methods that would not excite his observation, or alarm his jealousy, was the plan she proposed to herself; and she carried on the hidden warfare against poor Hernana's happiness, and what would have ensured her son's best safety and happiness, too, with a cleverness and undeviating perseverance worthy of a better cause.

For though she chose to consider this affair with Mr. Lovel's daughter, as a most unfortunate and degrading *mésalliance*, there was nothing to justify the feeling. Mr. Lovel was a gentleman by birth and education; his daughter gifted with everything that could best adorn a woman, wanting alone, in those exterior accomplishments, which are only to be obtained by the efforts of extraordinary natural genius, or at considerable expense in money. Neither

could any portion be expected with the young lady, for money to advance there was none; it was not in the least needed; but such, too, is the way with many parents. Precisely because it was not needed; because Philip Gorhambury would have enough, and more than enough, for every rational purpose, Mrs. Gorhambury could not endure the idea, of his marrying a portionless girl.

The innumerable good qualities she possessed—her personal charms, her intellectual ability, her strong, yet amiable and most affectionate character—what were they in comparison with five or ten wretched thousands of pounds or so, when there was so large a fortune upon Philip's side? To marry a girl with nothing down, was to throw himself quite away!

"How absent you are, Philip, this morning," Mrs. Gorhambury began, as she sat before her easel, from which her eyes had been for some time diverted, employed in watching her son, who was sitting at a table, his pencil in his hand, with a sketch which he apparently intended to copy, stretched out before him. He seemed, however, not even to see it as he sat there, his

hand in act as it were to draw, but never moving, and his eyes fixed upon the ground, in a perfect reverie. Now and then a deep sigh might be heard, and his sighing would seem to arouse him, for he would hastily raise his hand, look at the model before him, draw a line or two, and then relapse into his former inactivity. "How absent you are, Philip! what weighty matter, may I take a mother's liberty to ask, can have occurred in your somewhat too prosaic life, to weigh, as it would seem, so heavily upon your spirits? You have been sitting before that table, three good quarters of an hour by Shrewsbury clock, and fetching sighs like a furnace, as Rosalind would say, but doing no earthly thing besides."

He started like one conscience-struck at his mother's voice, and looked hurriedly up at her as she spoke; then most involuntarily there came another sigh. He strove to hide it up with a short cough, but his mother was not to be so imposed upon.

"Another!" she said. "What on earth can you have to sigh for, child?"

"Sigh! I don't know that I sighed. Nothing

certainly, have I to sigh for." And he sighed again.

"Another, and another, and another!" said his mother. "My dear boy, don't hide the matter from me. I love you very, very much; more than even mothers in general love their sons, and it is the pride and joy of my life, to think that my society can form a portion of your happiness; but I am not so proud, or so vain-glorious as to fancy I can constitute it entirely. My dear Philip, I guess pretty well what is the matter with you, though you strive to conceal it."

He glanced quickly at her, with a conscious, anxious look. He knew well, as he thought, what must be coming; and what should he say?—how should he parry the attack? Or had he not better confess the truth at once, cast himself upon his mother's indulgence, and have done with it?

"I know well what is the matter with you—" she said.

He knew well, too.

"You are dying of *ennui*—"

He felt as one who has prepared himself to

mount a difficult step in the dark, and his foot falls upon plain ground. He was actually confounded by this sudden dispersion of his fears and difficulties.

"You are dying of *ennui.*"

"No, mother, don't say so—don't think so."

"You are dying of *ennui.* All characters, of any mental superiority, are liable to be victimized, more or less, by that fiend, *ennui;* and the youthful, when of the gifted, most of all. *I* may be able to bear the monotony of this castle, which, romantic as it may appear, is, after all, a sort of prison to the mind. *I* am no longer young. I have my own occupations and interests, and can get along very tolerably. But *you*—what can *you* do? I have been reflecting upon this for some time. You are dying of *ennui,* I see; and no tyrant ever invented a more cruel *supplice,* as our neighbours would call it."

Certainly, it was not of *ennui* that he was dying, if dying he were; for his days and hours were full of interest—at times, of an almost devouring interest. He had of late become

more in love than ever: and so much in love, that he began seriously to feel that Hernana, come what would, must be his wife; and to be making up his mind to tell her so, in spite of the number of disagreeables, of all sorts and sizes, that he knew would be consequent upon the measure.

He had been very much harassed, as people of a character like his are prone to be, with fears for his own happiness, and with the struggles arising between apprehensions and wishes that would not be reconciled. His heart had been full of passion, and his head full of debate. Certainly, he had not known *ennui:* from that evil, at least, his perplexing fate had preserved him.

Just at this moment, he was vexed by hesitations as to whether he should deny the accusation at once, or let it pass: whether to seize upon this opportunity for a full explanation, which he dreaded as much as he desired, or defer it to another, as if there *could* be a better.

"It is generous in you," she said, "to look, as you are at this moment doing, as if you

would not own 'the soft impeachment;' generous to endeavour to conceal from your poor mother, that she cannot be all in all to your happiness. But it will not do. I know you, Philip, better than you, perhaps, know yourself; and at this moment, I am sure that you suffer from neither more nor less than *ennui*."

"No, mother, don't say so: pray don't repeat that. I assure you, *ennui* is the last feeling I have been suffering from these past two months. I *have* felt *ennui* often enough in my life, to know very well what it is; but I am not suffering from that cause now, I assure you."

"Perhaps you fancy so; but I tell you, *ennui* lies at the bottom of the mischief, depend upon it. What do you ride into G—— so often for, if it is not in search of excitement?"

He coloured a little, and said:

"I have not been seeking what is commonly called excitement."

"You don't think you have, perhaps; but I know you better; and I tell you, Philip—and trust me, who can read your heart as plainly as

the hand-writing upon the wall—*ennui*, and nothing more nor less than *ennui*, lies at the root of the matter; and it is that which drives you to seek excitement in any form or mode that can divert the demon, and afford a chance of feeling interested."

"Indeed, mother, you totally and altogether misapprehend the matter in this instance."

"So you think; and indeed if you did not, the very excitement which you find so agreeable would be at an end. If you were not hoodwinked and blinded by a strange sort of infatuation, you might ride to G—— seven mornings in the week, and you would not find yourself the better for it. Philip," she went on, assuming for the first time a more severe and earnest tone, "I must not have you throw away your life, like a young lieutenant in a marching regiment, for want of something better to do with your time and thoughts. My son, I have been to blame. Blinded by my fondness, by the fatal self-flattery of believing that my affection could suffice for your happiness, I have done very wrong. I have suffered you to stagnate here till the

slightest interest in the world was too grateful and too dangerous. I repeat it—I will not suffer you any longer, like a young lad in a marching regiment, to be sick to death of having nothing to do. I will not suffer you to fancy yourself in love—the word will out—because you have nothing better on earth to amuse your imagination with."

"Mother! what do you mean? I repeat it; you totally and entirely misapprehend the matter."

But she went on.

"Young men's first fancies, which they dignify to themselves with the sublime name of love, arise from various causes; sometimes it is the mere *besoin d'aimer*. Soft hearts, formed for the tender passion, easily find some girl or other, to be tender about, be it this or be it that, no matter. Others, whose minds and characters are of a different stamp, who require occupation because they have faculties to be occupied, fall in love because they have nothing else to do; deprived of the natural aliment required by their capacity, they want an object, and that is all. In this case the choice is

usually fixed upon the one least eligible or least attainable, because what they seek is struggle, difficulty, interest, object to be sought, and obstacles to be overcome; and woe, woe to them if they do overcome them; if, unhappily, insurmountable obstructions are not found to arrest them in their career! Woe, woe to them, when that which owed its chief, its almost entire attraction to difficulty, ceases to be difficult, and becomes their own! An imprudent, ill-assorted marriage, may have something in it wonderfully captivating to an imagination rendered morbid by idleness; but woe, woe, when the imagination has no longer anything to do with the matter, and a man finds himself set down for life with his *humble*, ill-chosen companion!"

"Mother, all you are saying may be very wise, may be very true, but I assure you it has nothing on earth to do in reference to me. I am not about to make an ill-assorted marriage, nor any marriage at all, that I know. I am greatly too young to sit down at present upon any terms. I must see more of life first."

"Unquestionably, undoubtedly. To own the truth to you, Philip, I did give you credit for more sense, more character, more manliness, than to fling away a life upon a fancy of the teens. Dear boy, it is time enough, as you say, to think of marriage ten years hence. You have the world to see, the world before you. You are not such a fool as to throw away the rich inheritance of an intellect such as yours, of a promise of life such as yours, upon one of those fond, dreamy fancies, which will possess lads of your age—there is no help for it—and which are only in danger of taking any form or consistency with a young man of sense, when he is so unfortunately left without sources of amusement and interest as you have lately been. I have been much to blame; you must forgive me for the sake of the cause, will you not, Philip? And now listen to me."

He felt at this moment as if all was as she described it. His love for Hernana set in contrast with the free, young man's life of excitement opening before him did appear as a fancy

and a charm, which no man of sense would suffer to prevail over his better self, and to which none but an imbecile would sacrifice a life. And yet even whilst his recreant heart was saying this, a small still voice whispered other things; and the creature he had loved from a child rose up before him.

"I listen, mother," he said; "but, indeed, you are alarming yourself most unnecessarily about nothing at all."

"I have no doubt my fears outran the occasion; but I assure you the advice I am going to give, and the plan I am about to propose, have only been a little hastened. My selfish wish to keep you near me but a little the sooner overcome, because you have lately taken a somewhat Corydon-like behaviour and expression. I don't believe my Philip is really in any very great danger from a tall brown girl in a kitchen; but it is as well not to entangle the brown girl herself by little acts of kindness and attention, which brown girls in kitchens are very apt to misunderstand, or pretend they misunderstand; and therefore, my dear, as in

the cases we have supposed, flight is the best security for all parties, I advise you to be wise in time, and order a pair of post-horses to your phaeton, and be off for Bath, which is now in the full tide of the season; and thence you can go to the continent, or anywhere else it may like you best—only don't let me see your face again for ten months at least. And I assure you, the Spartan mother, when she armed her son and sent him forth to battle without a tear, did not act much more heroically than I am doing at this moment, Philip."

And she looked at him with much and genuine emotion. She had very great influence with him, the more so that he was of so unstable a nature. People of a good deal of imagination without much strength of character are usually the victims of irresolution. They would and they would not; would have, without accepting the conditions annexed to the having; would refuse, without incurring the loss of happiness incident to refusal.

The manner in which this mother of his, whose intellect, taste, and knowledge of the

world, he so highly estimated—the way in which she spoke of his attachment, seemed at once greatly to disenchant the subject.

He began to wonder that he could have seriously entertained the idea of making Hernana Lovel, the daughter of a poor half-pay officer and curate, the brown girl busy in a kitchen, his wife. Regrets, tender remembrances, there might be—those gentle pullings at the heart with which a true love, like our good angel, seems to recall us to the sense of the pure and the truly wise and right; but he resisted them.

The evil influence—the world, the terrible world! with its dread laugh, its demands, its fancied obligations, spoke so loud, and spoke so emphatically when it borrowed his mother's voice!

He was silent; he seemed reflecting upon what she had urged. The woman that deliberates is lost—so is the man.

"Indeed, I am right," she went on, encouraged by the hesitation she read in his countenance. "I am sure the more you reflect upon the subject, the more you will find cause to

acknowledge the justice of what I say. Add to which there is this consideration: the plan I propose involves no consequences. Your absence for a short time from G—— will give you time to look about you, to think twice. And, oh, Philip! think twice, think a thousand times, before you throw your life away. Away, for what? an idle love dream, such as every young man of your age has dreamed in his turn, and every young man has, in his turn, awakened from."

"Mother! There is much truth in what you say, there is much in it to which I assent, much to which I absolutely refuse to assent. I should like, I think I ought to see *Hernana*—as the secret will out—I ought to see her again before I come to a conclusion."

"Exactly what I most particularly beg and desire that you will *not* do. Exactly what, if you are wise or know yourself, you will avoid doing. No; what I wish is, that you should try the strength of this attachment which you imagine you feel—try it fairly. If you see her under the influence of your present senti-

ments, you will only strengthen the illusion under which you lie. Besides, it is due to her, as well as to yourself, not to hold out delusive expectations. Your sudden departure will be a truthful, honourable proceeding. It will at once put an end to any—"

"Mother, if I have raised expectations, I ought to fulfil them."

"Idle nonsense! you can have raised no just expectations. What castles in the air a silly girl may build without any foundation, is nothing to you or to any one. The only point that concerns your honour is, *not* to give a foundation for such romances. You effectually avoid this by going away to Bath for a week or two, commissioning me to convey your adieus to the fair lady, a thing I will readily undertake to do; indeed, I ought to call and inquire after Mr. Lovel. Dear Philip be ruled by me. For my sake! for all our sakes! for the sake of the happiness of your whole future life! What I propose is wise, believe me, it is. And take it in the most unfavourable point of view; if it do no good, at least it can do no

harm. It is but going to Bath! What is the distance from Bath? You can return home in ten days or earlier, at any moment you wish it.

CHAPTER VIII.

Two days after this conversation a handsome chariot stopped at Mr. Lovel's door, and a finely-powdered footman inquired whether Miss Lovel was at home, giving the name of Mrs. Gorhambury.

Oh, how Hernana's heart began to flutter and beat! It was now an unusually long time since she had seen Philip—three days at least. She had become so accustomed to a visit from him every day, that it appeared to her an age. What could have kept him away so long? And now his mother was come in his place. Why did his mother come just now? she who so rarely—scarcely once in a year—

honoured the Curate with a call. Could she—could there be anything relating to Philip which brought her here in his place? The words, the hoped for long expected words, had often appeared to be just fluttering upon Philip's lips—they had not been said. Could he have employed his mother? Was she likely? Would *she* say them?

Hernana, be it observed, had no comprehension of the enormous breadth of the gulf which, in Mrs. Gorhambury's opinion, separated her from Philip. She *felt* rather, it may be said, than *knew* her own value. Though she could not touch the pianoforte like Henri Herz, or sing like Giulia Grisi, nor sketch like De Wint, nor speak six languages, she knew the value of a heart like hers; of such deep attachment, of such truth and sincerity, of a character so vigorous and so able. She felt instinctively the real value such things must prove to any one, most of all to a man like Philip.

Not in self-conceit, not making a false estimate of herself, was this done, for in fact she made no estimate at all; but she felt that

she suited him, and that she deserved him, and that the love they bore each other would secure the felicity of each. She felt that had their worldly positions been exchanged, she would have chosen Philip before all mankind. She believed that he felt the same strong and generous determination with regard to her. So she prepared herself to go down and meet Mrs. Gorhambury, with considerable emotion, no doubt, but without either trepidation or false shame; and as she turned the lock and entered the little parlour where Mrs. Gorhambury was sitting, the spirit and grace of her air and figure, her fine countenance, with the colour slightly raised, and her eyes so large, lustrous. and beautiful, moved that lady in a way she was not exactly prepared for.

Mrs. Gorhambury was too genuinely the artist not to be very much struck with beauty of form or expression whenever she might meet with it. She ceased at once to wonder at her son's taste, and rejoiced that she had that morning safely started him off for Bath.

Not that Hernana's figure was regularly

symmetrical, or delicately rounded as that of the heroine of such a romance ought to have been; for she was, perhaps, rather too tall, her limbs larger than a just proportion would have allowed, and her figure somewhat wanting in those softer curves of outline which belong to perfect female beauty; but it was the elasticity, the spirit, the life, which pervaded all, that something indescribable, which at once assures us that the possessor of such an exterior is one far above the common sort, something of the classical—of the heroic age. Mrs. Gorhambury could not settle with herself exactly how it was.

But she was wonderfully pleased, determined as she had been not to be pleased. She no longer marvelled, as I said, at Philip's infatuation; but this very admiration was inimical to poor Hernana's interests; the more Mrs. Gorhambury saw reason to dread the power of her attractions, the more she resolved to put a stop to the affair and prevent future intercourse.

Hernana came in, as I have said, looking as she was, a remarkably fine, striking girl, with her colour a little heightened, for her heart in truth was beating fast, yet no weak, nervous fear, no base self-desertion were sinking that heart, or those free and wholesome spirits. She knew Philip Gorhambury loved her; and she believed in his truth and fidelity, for she judged him by herself.

She felt certain that Mrs. Gorhambury's unexpected visit must have some reference to what deeply affected her. Not that she expected that Philip would have delegated to his mother the office of declaring his sentiments —an office he was so well fitted to discharge himself; but Mrs. Gorhambury so very rarely, or never, came to the house of her husband's Curate, that she could not help looking upon this unusual piece of condescension upon her part, an omen upon the right side, a sign that she was beginning to take interest in herself for the sake of her son. Therefore, it was with far more pleasure than she was accustomed

to feel when about to meet that lady, that Hernana had obeyed the summons to attend her down stairs.

Mrs. Gorhambury was seated in the little parlour upon the only large chair in the room, one devoted to Mr. Lovel's comfort, but which now stood empty by the window. This window looked out upon the little garden, which generally, through the care of Hernana, was neat and pretty, though she had far too much work upon her hands to be able to bestow much pains or time upon it, and her father had far too many uses for his money to allow of her employing the labour of others upon this innocent piece of luxury. I wish I could say that it ever looked so pretty and so trim as it would have done if Hernana had found little else to do but look after it. A garden, such as one sees sometimes, and reads of very often, it never was; and now, long neglected during Mr. Lovel's tedious illness, it was become a perfect wilderness, and anything but a pleasing wilderness.

For it was that time of the year when autumn is in the sere and yellow leaf, or rather in the black and sodden stem; and broken sunflower stalks, and miserable, half-dying chrysantheums, were to be seen, with Chinese roses putting out a few pinkish, deplorable, sickly flowers among their straggling branches. The little grass-plot was all rough with untrimmed grass, and half covered with decaying leaves. Such was the cottage garden upon which the eyes of Mrs. Gorhambury, the poet, the artist, and the fine lady in one, were bent with an expression of disgust, somewhat more than the occasion required.

For, after all, it was but a bit of garden-ground that was rough. All within the house was clean to precision, and looked neat, in spite of the homeliness of the furniture. So, at this time of the year, and occupied in pious cares as she had been, methinks Hernana might have escaped contempt and censure for her neglected garden.

But Mrs. Gorhambury was in a humour to

see everything in the worst light; and the dreary spectacle of vegetable disorder before her eyes she chose to accept as an indication of that want of delicacy in habits and taste within, which she allowed to herself as a just reason for dreading this *mésalliance* for her son; choosing to forget the inveterate and unfeeling pride which lay concealed under all these petty pretences.

The state of the garden might be disgusting; but the mien and carriage of the young girl as she entered the room, gave rise to other sensations. There was the undefined air of superiority belonging to a free and generous spirit about her, which filled Mrs. Gorhambury, as I have said, with sentiments partly of admiration, and partly of apprehension, which she found very particularly disagreeable.

"I am sorry to have kept you waiting, Madam," began Hernana, as she entered the room; "I beg your pardon for the delay. My father was just being put into his bed again, and I could not leave him till it was done."

"How is Mr. Lovel? I hope better. I called to inquire after him, to satisfy my own anxiety upon the subject, and report to Mr. Gorhambury. I hope you can give me a more favourable account."

"Not much more favourable," said Hernana, sadly. "My father is still very, very ill. Something there is about him which yields to no medicines prescribed; a languor and weakness it is impossible to conquer. He is very much grieved for the inconvenience to which he fears he must be putting Mr. Gorhambury; but how can he help it? And, then, this dreadful fever was caught in the discharge of his duty."

"I have heard so. I think it is a pity to run such risks, and for purposes of, I fear, very doubtful utility; for, after all, what can be done? The apothecary, and a good bottle of wine or two, I presume is the principal thing."

"Oh, Madam!—" then she stopped herself.

She felt as if there would be a certain air of presumption, of conceit, in saying more upon

this subject to one so much older, and who should have been so much better taught than herself; she marvelled, and was silent.

Mrs. Gorhambury seemed to read her thoughts.

"Do not misunderstand me," she went on; "I know all you would say;" and then she muttered something about death-bed repentance and enthusiasm.

"My father thinks," began Hernana, and then she stopped again.

"Oh! you need not tell me what Mr. Lovel thinks upon these subjects," Mrs. Gorhambury continued, with the slightest possible acerbity in her tone; "we all know his high notions of duty, and his peculiar opinions upon certain subjects. I only wish the consequences had not stretched him upon a sick bed, and laid him up useless for months."

The heart of Hernana began to beat faster. It was a rebel heart, and it would beat high when indignant. The colour flew to her usually pale face; but she said nothing.

She turned a little away, that was the only external sign of anger, or disgust, which she gave.

Mrs. Gorhambury either did not, or was too proud to show, that she perceived or cared for the little demonstration. She dropped the subject, and went on with a manner altogether unconcerned.

"What are your plans? What are you about to do? What does Mr. Fenmore advise?"

"The doctor says, Madam, that change of air is absolutely necessary; and we are thinking of trying what a journey of a few weeks will do. By my father's desire, I wrote to Mr. Gorhambury upon the subject this morning."

"A journey! This is a strange resolution enough; and odd, that Mr. Gorhambury was not informed of it before. *His* convenience seems not very particularly attended to in this."

"Dear Madam, what can we do? My poor father is too helpless to be of the slightest use

to Mr. Gorhambury; yet he was most anxious to stay upon the spot, in hopes of being soon able to resume his duties. It was not till this morning that Mr. Fenmore mentioned the subject, and proposed the plan with so much urgency, that at last I persuaded my father to allow me to write to Mr. Gorhambury."

"Mr. Fenmore! This morning!" Mrs. Gorhambury mused for awhile. "This morning, don't you say? And where, if I may take the liberty of asking, is it your intention to go?"

"That point is not settled yet. It must depend upon my father's strength. And to own the truth," she added, colouring a little, "upon the strength of his purse."

"Are you to go to the sea coast?"

"No, I believe not. Mr. Fenmore recommends a change to some inland place, where my father will enjoy change of air, and have the advantage at the same time of good medical attendance, which he is not, indeed, at present, in a fit state to do without."

"Perhaps Bath would suit you. Perhaps, Bath is the place you are going to," said Mrs. Gorhambury, speaking with a certain hesitation and difficulty.

"No, I believe not. Rather, perhaps, Clifton, or the Hot Wells; or, if we can manage it—"

"Clifton! the Hot Wells. They are very near Bath," said Mrs. Gorhambury.

"I believe so."

"I presume Miss Lovel *knows* that."

"I might have said so. But the place Mr. Fenmore particularly recommended is Launceston, or Penzance, in Cornwall; though the last I believe *is* near the sea."

"But you prefer Clifton or the Hot Wells, because they are near Bath, eh, Miss Lovel?"

"I know nothing of Bath. My only reason for preferring Clifton is that it is nearer, and the journey will be less expensive. I know nothing of Bath. We have no reason for wishing to be near Bath."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Gorhambury, drily, "I thought *you* might prefer it, as it is just the high season for Bath. But I forgot—you profess to despise the world, and are indifferent to its times and seasons."

"I cannot profess to despise that which I never knew; and probably—" but she altered the word to "perhaps," for she was truth itself—"and perhaps never shall know."

Mrs. Gorhambury marked the change, and it irritated and provoked her very much. She felt quite angry; so she repeated the word.

"Perhaps! Oh then, Miss Lovel *has* some expectation of being introduced into the great world some time or other."

"No one knows what may happen to them," answered Hernana.

"True; no one knows. But most of us may form a pretty shrewd guess. Well, I keep very much aloof from it myself; but I do not pretend to share your indifference upon the subject just at this moment. I hear Bath is

unusually gay and pleasant, and I heartily wish it may be so, for Philip started for the place yesterday in high spirits, and full of anticipations of enjoyment. It is his first season, though I prophecy it will not be his last. I heartily hope his expectations of pleasure will not be disappointed. All the world of beauty and fashion is there, as the vulgar newspapers have it, and—

"My dear Miss Lovel, what's the matter with you? You look suddenly taken ill; quite pale—over-fatigue. Pray, try my smelling-bottle."

"No, thank you, Ma'am," putting it coldly aside with her hand. "I am not very strong just now; but the fresh air is the best thing. I will take a turn upon the grass-plot, if you will give me leave, and return again."

Yes; it should be the grass-plot — the grass-plot in front of the parlour windows. Mrs. Gorhambury should not think that she was gone away to cry about it.

Fresh air would enable her to hold up till

this cruel, cruel woman was gone: that was all she just then wanted.

"Go, my dear, by all means," said Mrs. Gorhambury, in a milder tone; for she could not help being a little touched by the dismay written in the fallen countenance.

If Hernana had not been endowed with a courage and fortitude far beyond the common, she never could have stood the shock as she did. She must have given way to a burst of tears, or fallen flat upon the ground; but shed a tear she would not, and faint she did not, though the room was swimming round her; shrill noises were in her ears, and she scarcely knew where she was.

She managed, however, to escape into the garden; took two or three turns upon the little grass-plot, just in front of the windows, Mrs. Gorhambury still sitting there, and, as she knew, watching her; and then, having collected her scared and distracted spirits, and composed herself as well as she could, she re-entered the room.

And Mrs. Gorhambury, pitiless as ever, (for these unequivocal signs of emotion betrayed, as she thought, the secret understanding between the two), went on as if finishing her sentence:

"And so I supposed you too might be going to Bath, or into the neighbourhood of Bath?"

"No, Madam; certainly not. Mr. Fenmore wishes us to go to Launceston, as I believe I had the honour of telling you."

"He is quite right: I am glad to hear you have come to that determination," said Mrs. Gorhambury, greatly relieved. "Mr. Fenmore is unquestionably right. The air of Bath, even of Clifton and the Hot Wells, has something bleak in it, after all. Launceston, on the other hand, is the Madeira of England, I have been told; I never was there. Besides, you will find it very cheap; and the difference of prices will more than compensate for the difference in the length of the journey. But I am afraid you still hanker after Bath."

"What should make you think so, Mrs. Gorhambury? No, there is no hankering, indeed: Bath is the last place upon earth that I should wish to go to."

"Keep to that resolution, for it is the wisest you can make, in every point of view," said Mrs. Gorhambury, with some emphasis, as she rose to go; for Hernana's colour changed so alarmingly, she was in terror lest there should be a scene; and as the traveller, descrying the signals of approaching storm, hurries to shelter, Mrs. Gorhambury hastened to take refuge in her carriage. "I must be be gone. Don't ring the bell. Pray, don't trouble yourself: I can open the door myself. I shall be glad to hear of your safe arrival at Launceston. And can we be of any use? There is our cart; it is doing nothing at the Rectory. It can take your baggage to the coach. Anything else?"

But Hernana spoke not. She could not force her voice to utter a syllable of thanks. She would not stretch forth her hand to take

the offered one of Mrs. Gorhambury, who, triumphing in her success, extended it with every appearance of cordiality and good-humour.

This cordiality and good-humour made Hernana feel more heart-sick than all the rest. The anger she could stand; the good-humour made her feel almost hatred.

Gone to Bath! Well, and why should he not go to Bath? Was there anything so unreasonable in his wishing to go to Bath? anything so unheard of, in a young man taking such a measure, that it should produce all the effect it did upon Hernana?

Philip was gone to Bath to be very gay there, that was all she had heard; and Philip had taken his departure without coming to take leave. Perhaps this was unavoidable. She felt, she knew that it was not unavoidable. Perhaps he would write to her, to inquire after her father, to explain why he went away thus suddenly.

No! She knew that he would *not* write. It was all over between them. The world had seized its victim. Philip would be but a too easy one. She was not altogether deceived as to Philip's character, much as she loved and admired him. She felt that he was not made of that stuff of which the great, the heroic are made; and she felt that to adhere to his preference for her would, under the circumstances, savour of the great and the heroic.

She cast one despairing glance around her. It was all darkness. It was as if every light of her life had gone out at once.

Philip had been the loadstar of her existence ever since she remembered her existence; the object to which, as by a natural magnetic influence, she tended. Whilst he had been there, all things else had been in comparison indifferent, as regarded joy or sorrow, with only the exception of her father and Lady Aylmer; and even those too, dear as they were! oh, how different it was! Philip had been the secret source of joys so ineffable, consolations and

supports so precious, so strong, so inexhaustible! His affection first, and then his love, had so entirely constituted the existence within, that now all was suddenly swept away, she felt as if chaos were, indeed, come again.

CHAPTER IX.

THEN Mrs. Gorhambury went next to visit another young lady.

Yes, there was another young lady just arrived at G——; and before Mrs. Gorhambury left town, most certainly she must go and pay her a visit.

This young lady is the daughter of the Lady Maria Westmore, and of the Dean Westmore, of G——, to whom I slightly introduced you at the beginning of this history.

Maria, for she is called after her mother, has just completed her education at a highly fashionable boarding-school; and has returned home to be introduced into the world, and, in

due time, married, and all that; and she seems set apart as one of fortune's favourites, to accumulate around herself all the good things of this life, and make a very slender experience of its anxieties and sorrows.

She is excessively pretty, extremely sweet-tempered, and kind-hearted enough; very elegant in her dress and habits, moderately well educated in more important respects; highly talented, she is called, which means in this case that she possesses a remarkable talent for music; but more than all this, she is daughter to Lady Maria, and the Dean of G——, consequently a person of the first importance in her own little circle.

Mrs. Gorhambury has had her eye upon this young lady for her son Philip ever since she was born. Mr. Gorhambury, in his arbitrary way of arranging things, has, because he wishes and chooses it, looked upon the matter as of course settled. The Dean and Lady Maria have in some way or other accustomed themselves to think it is to be, without taking any particular pains to bring it about; for the Dean is a man of too much sense, and we may add

of a matrimonial nature; and Lady Maria is too much accustomed to let things take their course to adopt very energetic measures to secure any plan.

All that has been done, therefore, upon their side has been to suffer the two young people to pass a good deal of their time together. Little aware were they of what they were doing, or that while, Philip Gorhambury was nourishing a romantic passion for the Curate's daughter, the Dean's daughter was giving all her girl's heart, such as it was, to him.

A dangerous youth this Philip Gorhambury, it would seem, since two girls so extremely unlike, as were Hernana and Maria, should alike be bewitched by him.

Maria's love had, however, as yet been a hidden thing—hidden at least from every one but her bosom friend at school, a certain Miss Harriet Manvers, to whose sympathising bosom she had confided her passion, and from whom she had received all the encouragement which loftiness of feeling to condescend to any schemes

one romantic young lady is accustomed to bestow upon the love-tale of another.

In this instance, however, the fair heroine's attachment was not productive of any dire wretchedness, for there was a sort of atmosphere of encouragement around her. Philip Gorhambury was flattering and attentive, smiled very sweetly, and rattled away very gaily when in her presence. He had the run of the Deanery, and was a welcome guest whenever he made his appearance, which the close intimacy of the families rendered a very constant occurrence; this being, however, too habitually his custom from childhood to be significant of any peculiar feeling or remark.

But Maria was far too young and inexperienced to think of distinctions of this nature, and quite inclined to put the interpretation of her friend, Miss Harriet Manvers, upon Philip's visits. Though, certainly, to one more acquainted with the symptoms of such things, the easy manner in which Philip treated Maria, which had every appearance of being merely

that of a young man's good-natured indulgence to a pretty school-girl, would have given no encouragement to more serious hopes or expectations.

But be that as it might, with the other members of the family, Maria found herself an object of the greatest partiality and indulgence, and for Philip's sake she loved Mrs. Gorhambury very much, and even found it possible to love harsh, unamiable Mr. Gorhambury himself, after a manner. So she was delighted when she heard Mrs. Gorhambury's name announced, as the footman opened the door of the drawing-room in which she was sitting with her mother.

Maria had been absent for about eighteen months, during which none of the Gorhamburys had seen her. These months had been the finishing months. She went away a thin, lanky girl, in a white frock and a long sash, looking gawky and unformed, as girls at that age are apt to do; she had returned, a young lady complete, in a dress of the first fashion,

admirably adapted to display the beauty of her form and figure, both of which had in the course of that time ripened into something very pretty indeed.

Mrs. Gorhambury called to pay her first visit to the young lady as young lady. I ought to have added, that after the finishing year at school, Maria had spent six months, accompanied by her mother, partly in London, partly in visiting among her mother's relations. She had been presented, and so forth, and was now come back, still quite as much in love with Philip Gorhambury as ever. For, after all, though she had been a good deal out, she had not mingled much with the gay world. The people she belonged to, being rather a formal, old-fashioned set, she had not been thrown into the society of young people of her own age; so, even if her little heart had been inclined to inconstancy, there had been small opportunity for it.

She was delighted, therefore, to hear Mrs. Gorhambury announced, and rose up with a

face animated with pleasure as that lady entered the room, and who having made her compliments to Lady Maria, turned towards the daughter, holding out both her hands. She started back as she did so with a little cry of pleased surprise; then advancing, took her by the hand, and drawing her forwards, gazed at her for a moment or two with a look of the most gratified affection, and then saluting her upon each cheek, said:

"My dear, you must allow an old friend—I have known you from your long frocks, you know. How you are grown; and how well you look!" And she turned to Lady Maria with a sort of appeal, as if to say, is she not charming?

Lady Maria thought so, but was of so inveterately quiet and impassible a nature, that not even the admiration excited by her own daughter could move her much. She responded by a calm, self-satisfied smile, to Mrs. Gorhambury's animated glance.

"What a cotton-wool doll it is," thought that lady; "but the girl is charming." And then she secretly congratulated herself upon

her morning's work; rejoicing that Philip was off for Bath, and that Hernana was on the move for Cornwall, or the Madeiras, if possible. Yes, it should be to the Madeiras, if possible. The absurd affair—if it could even be called an affair—was ended, and Philip would return to see Maria in all her beauty, his fancy no longer disturbed, as she hoped, by another image.

"How she is grown and altered!" repeated Mrs. Gorhambury, sitting down by Lady Maria, her eyes still fixed in delighted admiration upon Miss Westmore. "She is perfectly charming!" she whispered. "I always thought she promised to be very pretty, but anything so perfectly lovely as this, I never anticipated."

"Do you think so?" lifting her glass and looking at her daughter. "Yes, I believe she is thought pretty well by some people."

"And my dear," turning to Miss Westmore, "I hope your fine musical talent has not been neglected. I trust your pianoforte has not been forgotten in the midst of the gaieties of

the great world you have been living in."

"Oh, as for that, I don't think we have been anything very particularly gay — have we, Maria? I think our set is dull enough— don't you, child? I declare I think the world's gone stupid since I was young. Yes, I believe the passion for your pianoforte was kept alive. I used to hear you practising it most assiduously at Lord Carlton's, at least; but then it was horribly stupid there, and the poor thing had literally nothing else to do."

"It was not particularly entertaining, certainly," said Maria; "but indeed, Mrs. Gorhambury, I should not have forgotten my darling piano wherever I had been. I love music more passionately than ever."

This was said quite naturally. Maria's taste for music was genuine. She inherited it from her father the Dean. She had been cradled in music. She played charmingly: really charmingly. Not as mere good masters teach a clever girl to play, but with a fine natural talent, carefully developed by the best instruction.

"I thought," said Mrs. Gorhambury, "that Miss Westmore had too much genius ever to prove inconstant to her pianoforte. Great talent and great delight in an occupation are usually found united."

"I do love my pianoforte, dearly," said Maria, "and I have often thought, how charming it would be, if dear Mrs. Gorhambury would let me accompany her delightful harp, sometimes. I have brought down some capital duetts of Stoddart's, for harp and pianoforte."

"I know them, I think," cried Mrs. Gorhambury, eagerly. "Is there not one begins la, la, la," singing a stave or two. "Mills sent them down a few weeks back. They are very good. There is an accompaniment for a violoncello obligato, to one or two of them."

Maria coloured a little — a pretty, sweet colour it was, and said "yes, she believed so."

"Then we shall make quite a concert when my son comes back. Philip is gone to Bath, Lady Maria."

"What do you let him go to Bath

for? There is nobody worth knowing at Bath."

Mrs. Gorhambury was a little set down by this speech, but she rallied with an:

"Oh, it is only *pour se désennuyer*. We were so dreadfully dull at Castle Avon. Mr. Gorhambury, I think, grows more sulky every day, and his dislike for company increases. Poor Philip! It really is hard upon a young man, and he hates field sports, you know. I thought he would be moped to death, so I advised him to take a run to Bath. It used to be gay enough at this time of the year in my time."

"I'm sure it's not gay now, at this time or any time. But, true, as you say, one does not know where to go, for Cheltenham is so Irish, and Leamington so common-place; and, as for the things in Derbyshire, they're horrid. Why don't you send him to Paris?"

"I am a foolish mother. We have been so happy, so much accustomed to enjoy things with each other, that now the continent is at last opened again; I own I wished to travel with him, and that we should visit Paris and Italy for the first time together."

"Well, Mr. Philip Gorhambury is a most exemplary young man, I do not doubt. I suppose you think you shall keep him *good* by going with him to Paris. Many mothers, I have known, lying under that blessed delusion."

She spoke with the contempt with which a mere passionless woman of conventionalities and the world, regards anything that deviates in the slightest degree from that world's beaten track, quite incapable of either sympathizing with, or even imagining the existence of, feelings strong enough to occasion such a course. She, I believe, thought Mrs. Gorhambury a somewhat out of the way and very affected woman, because she had great talents, strong feelings, and led a life somewhat different from other people.

More especially the affection which was professed between the mother and son appeared to her exaggerated and preposterous; and the idea of such a thing as their really planning to travel together, seemed to her the very climax of absurdity.

Not so to Maria. She thought it charming

of Mrs. Gorhambury to be so fond of her son; and thrice charming of Philip to love to travel with his mother. She only wished with all her heart that she might but be of the party.

"Dear mamma," she said, "how natural it seems that Mrs. Gorhambury and Mr. Philip Gorhambury, who have both such a passion for pictures, should love to visit the Louvre together."

"Dear me, yes. I suppose it may be; but it strikes me as rather original. And, so Mr. Philip Gorhambury is really gone to Bath; and who, for goodness sake—do tell me—who on earth can be there?"

"There are the L.'s, I know; and Sir C. C's. family, and the F's." mentioning a few names; and whilst she did so Maria's heart began to beat a little faster. She knew none of these families, but she fancied half a dozen nice girls belonging to each of them.

"The L.'s and the F.'s! Yes, tolerable people. Well, I hope he will amuse himself very much. And, pray, when do you expect him back again?"

"In a fortnight, or ten days, at the farthest. And then, Miss Westmore, we will try the trios,

shall we? Philip is excessively improved upon his violoncello; he really plays charmingly."

"How's Mr. Lovel?" interrupted Lady Maria. "The Dean wrote me he had been very ill whilst we were away. I hope he's better. He'd be a great loss; he's such a useful man, I've heard the Dean say."

"And dear Hernana, how is she?" put in Maria. "Mamma, it rained so yesterday, you would not let me go out; but I must put on my bonnet and just run down to her."

"You can't go to-day, child; for one of the carriage-horses is lame. As for your running, like a madcap, through those dirty streets towards the wharfs, I do not intend to allow of its ever being done. You forget you are no longer a child."

"Mr. Lovel is better," said Mrs. Gorhambury, "but still unable to resume his duty. They talk of sending him to a milder climate—Cornwall, or, perhaps, the Madeiras. I saw Hernana a quarter of an hour ago. She was full of the scheme."

"What a fine girl that daughter of Mr. Lovel's is!" said Lady Maria. "She reminds

me of Lady E. E. Such a gipsy of a creature! I really am half afraid of her, girl as she is; she has so much dignity about her.

"She is a dear, dear girl," added Maria; "and I love her almost better than any one in the world, except darling Harriet, who is married, and gone nobody knows where. Mamma, you really must let me go to her, or let me send and ask her to come to me. As for the carriage-horse, its leg will never be mended: our carriage-horses' legs never are. So I will have a fly, and a footman; that will be the best way; for I would rather go to her, than send to ask her here now her father's so poorly. And besides, I do so love that Parsonage, and the wee parlour, and the kitchen."

"That I can quite understand," said her mother. "There is nothing I love so much, or think so pretty, as a kitchen in a cottage. Well, child, I have no objection. I think Hernana Lovel a very good friend for you," added Lady Maria, who, when she chose to

make use of her understanding, possessed a tolerable one; "better a thousand times than that odious Harriet Manvers, who was the most vulgar school-girl I ever met with—quite enough to make one ill."

CHAPTER X.

"You are come back, dear Maria. How dear of you to come to me so soon! so glad, so thrice glad as I am to see you!" cried Hernana, embracing her friend, whose young and lovely face and figure, set off by the elegance of her dress, seemed quite to brghten the lowly little kitchen, into which she had forced herself, delighted to find Hernana there in the midst of her household gods.

"Dear me! I am so glad to come—so glad to be here! Oh! I have seen nothing I liked so well, nothing I thought so pretty, nothing to

me so delightful, since I went away, as you, in your kitchen, Hernana."

"What a remarkable thing you are!" giving her a little tap upon the cheek. "What, after all the fine people you have been among, and the fine sights you have seen!"

"I declare to you," said Maria, sitting down, "it is just as I say. I don't know what there is in me, but you cannot think what a bore I find things that everybody seems to like so much, and make such a fuss about. I find what they call society so tiresome; but I believe, as ill-luck would have it, I belong to a very tiresome set of people. I had ten thousand times rather lead the life you lead, Hernana, so that I might but have my pianoforte. I must have my pianoforte, you know."

"As great a rage for that as ever?"

"Oh, greater and greater than ever; and I really play so well, it's quite the astonishment of everybody; and of course that adds to the pleasure. It's no vanity in me to say so, but I really do play very well indeed; and I wish you would

come to the Deanery, and hear me; but you do not care for pianofortes?"

"Not very much. I love music too, I believe; and I like to hear you, because I love you."

"That's very kind of you to say, Hernana; but what's the matter with you?" said Maria, looking into her friend's face, which, indeed, was paler than usual, and her eyes were heavy, and with a clouded expression, affording a strong contrast to the usual bright serenity of those twin stars. "Mrs. Gorhambury, who was with us yesterday, told me Mr. Lovel had been ill, and that you were very anxious about him, that he did not recover kindly, and that you were going to try change of air. I am sure if *he* wants change of air, you look as if *you* wanted it quite as much; you are quite an altered creature since I went away."

"You have been eighteen months away. Eighteen months is a great space in life! We all change in that time!" said Hernana, willing to put the matter aside. Alas! she knew it

was within the last eight-and-forty hours, for that was the time which had elapsed since Mrs. Gorhambury's visit, that the change had come over her.

She did, indeed, look ill. What she had suffered in that time exceeds description: though she had from the first moment that she heard of Philip's departure in this unkind manner—without a line, without a call, without a word, after all that she could not but be conscious had passed—felt a kind of instinctive certainty that everything was over between them. Dimly the future shadowed itself forth to her mind; how it would *be*, she felt it had not been given her to discern. This feeling alone pressed upon her with that dire conviction not to be shaken off; that melancholy divination of the heart to which, struggle against as we will, we seem impelled by a power too strong for us. In vain, as the first panic subsided, and she had leisure to reflect, did she argue the matter with herself, striving to reason herself into a hope, which the something within her obstinately re-

fused to accept. It would not do; her heart seemed to have died within her, all the spirit, relish, light of life to be gone.

Heavy and drooping she went about her usual duties; but all the alacrity with which she was accustomed so cheerfully to fulfil them had forsaken her. In vain she tried to rally—to be what, till that day, she had ever been; in vain!

A blight had gone over her: it seemed as if the death-breathing wind of the desert had passed, and all that was beautiful and glad had withered away.

She had loved Philip so long—so long! that it seemed as if she had loved him before she could remember. Her father and Philip—that had been the whole of her existence. Her father had her affection, her interest, her love, her duty; but Philip was the soul of her life, her light, and her joy!

And how exceedingly happy had been these last four weeks; these four weeks of toil and anxiety, sweetened by his visits, by his kind-

ness, his tenderness, and rendered—oh, too rapturous! too exquisite! as certain looks, certain words, certain gestures, so precious, so expressive, would escape from him at times; only the more significant, only the more apparently sincere, because they were evidently involuntary.

Such a forty-eight hours as she had gone through since Mrs. Gorhambury's visit! Oh, there are dreadful passages in human life—passages which are endured in the hidden silence of the inner being, unregarded, unrevealed, unmarked by the nearest and dearest, known only to Him who reads the heart, and sends His chastisement of sorrow to His children!

A gleam of joy had gladdened the darkness of her spirit as Maria entered. Kindness is always healing. She had loved the Dean's daughter much; more than, as she had often told herself, was prudent, for she was well aware of the social distance which separated them, and she doubted Maria's constancy. To

find her the same—so ready to seek her out—so loving and affectionate, had warmed and cheered her. There was quite a glow of the heart. For a few moments other things were forgotten, and Hernana was herself again. But that soon passed away, and the heaviness of sadness came over her, giving that extraordinary expression of suffering to her face which had surprised Maria so much. Maria was extremely good-natured but not very discerning, and the depression of Hernana's manner must have been great to have excited her attention.

"Change in eighteen months!" was her reply to Hernana's remark; "yes to be sure we do, but not as you are changed; but I know what it is," she went on, for her poor little foolish heart was full of one subject almost to the exclusion of every other. "I do believe you are in love! Nay, I vow you are colouring scarlet! This *is* charming! I thought you never would be so—what shall I call it?—as to fall in love. Oh! it is delightful. Now we

can have confidences and talk of our lovers together—which, you were so wise, I never dared do before, Hernana. I was forced to take refuge with Harriet Manvers, who was never fit to hold the candle to you; and now she has disgusted me outright, for, after pretending to me to be dying for Lieutenant Oswald, of the 5th, who, though he had not a penny, she vowed she was ready to scrub the floor for—what has she done! but, in less than two months' time, thrown the poor man overboard, and married a good-for-nothing old squire, thirty years older than herself, because he has thirty thousand a-year. Isn't it *too* bad?"

Hernana smiled. "I always thought Miss Manvers a little too much a votary of the great world to suit you, Miss Westmore."

"Don't Miss Westmore me; but come and sit down here on the window-seat. How nice it is! with the window open and the robins chirping this morning; and now, first tell me a little about yourself and your affairs, and then I will tell you about mine."

"Dear Maria, how you run on! I have nothing to tell you, believe me; but I shall be happy to hear what you have to tell me."

"Ah, you are so close and reserved. That's a great fault in you, Hernana, let me tell you, for I am as positive as I sit here that you are in love. It is impossible to look in your face and doubt for a moment what's the matter with you—I know it," she went on, "but too well by myself. Oh, Hernana, to think of Philip Gorhambury!"

Hernana gave a sudden start.

"What's the matter?" cried Maria.

No; the idea had never presented itself before. It may seem strange, but she had not seen them much together. The first pang of jealousy, added to that of desertion, is dreadful.

"Nothing! nothing! You were saying something about Mr. Philip Gorhambury, I think."

"You think! Why, to be sure I was. You

think! Well, you are a strange creature," said Maria, somewhat pettishly. "Did you never find me out? Harriet Manvers found me out in a moment."

"Perhaps so. I am not clever in finding people out. So, Mr. Philip Gorhambury, perhaps it is, that—"

"Dear me!" cried Maria, throwing herself back in her chair with a sort of childish glee. "So you really never detected me before! How odd you are, Hernana. Oh me! I have been dying for Philip Gorhambury since I can't tell when."

It looked so like impiety, so like sacrilege, so like blasphemy, to speak thus of feelings so sacred; and of him! Hernana dropped the hand she held with a mingled sensation of disgust and contempt; then, forgive her for it, her heart was a little cheered. It was impossible, she felt sure that a man like Philip Gorhambury, having once loved herself, could desert her for a trifler like this. Oh no! He was gone. He had done that

which she felt he must intend her to understand as a rupture of the tie between them. He had been cruel, not to say treacherous; but he would not abandon her for this one! The same instinctive assurance which had driven her well nigh to despair by the certainty that he was parted from her for ever, now told her that he was gone to be free; not to shackle himself to another, not for such another! The pangs of jealousy subsided; and, in comparison, all others seemed supportable. It did her good. The intense pain of the one feeling seemed to annihilate that of the other.

"And to think of his being gone to Bath just as I came home! Is it not cruel? Is it possible he can care for me the least in the world? And yet Harriet Manvers, the last time she was here, vowed that he was dying for me. And she said, the very little notice he ever took of me in company was a certain proof, for that his eyes were never off me when he could do it unobserved. Now tell me what you think of it, Hernana?"

"I have seen you so little together, that I cannot pretend to be a judge; but I should say—" and she hesitated.

"What would you say? Out with it!"

"But you will not like to hear it."

"Not if you are going say that you think he don't care for me; to be sure, I should not like that. For, in the first place, I'm positive it's false; and in the second, you cannot possibly know. So pray don't torment and teaze me with any doubts about that, which I have every reason upon earth to be certain is a fact."

Again Hernana's heart began to sink. Oh! how she longed to question, to lead this somewhat indiscreet young lady to a full avowal of all she thought and felt; but it seemed to her scarcely honourable to accept the confession of another's feelings when she so resolutely concealed her own. She was silent; which rather provoked the other young lady, who thus ran on:

"I am sure, if implied compliments and pres-

sure of the hand, and standing by the piano-forte whilst I am playing, and all sorts of little things mean anything, there has been no want of them! And I must say, and shall always, that Philip Gorhambury has used me excessively ill if he means nothing; but he must mean something, and I am sure he does mean something, though he *is* gone to Bath. Now do tell me what I ought to think; I assure you the last time I saw him, and that was in London—"

"You met in London!"

"To be sure we did; why do you look so oddly? I declare, Hernana, you are half-crazy this morning. Why, in the name of goodness should we *not* meet in London, if you please?"

"Oh, I don't know! No reason in the world; only I did not know that you had."

"That's not very wonderful, I should think. I suppose Mr. Philip Gorhambury does not render an account of his sayings and goings on

to you! Yes, though you don't happen to be aware of it, we *did* meet in London. And Harriet Manvers said, that his attentions were very particular; but, for my part, I wish he had been a little more explicit—sometimes he seemed as if he would, sometimes as if he would not. You know, papa was always so glad to see him, and made so much of him, that he was forced to talk a vast deal to *him*, when Harriet Manvers said she was positive he was dying to be talking to me; and yet, if papa would go out of the room, he didn't often seem to care to come; he'd chat with mamma, or any one else, or turn over the pages of a book, rather than, as it would seem, come up to me; but Harriet said that was mere shyness and awkwardness, and yet of all men upon earth, Philip seems to me least troubled with those sort of things. What do *you* think?"

"I do not think, to speak honestly, that *I should* be quite of your friend Miss Manvers' opinion. I do *not* think Mr. Philip Gorham-

bury shy, and I do think if he loved you, he would not keep you in ignorance of it; for why should he?"

"I am sure I can't guess why he should, for I wish papa and mamma didn't show quite so much as they do, how they would like to have him for a son-in-law. Men are such queer creatures, Harriet Manvers says. I should not wonder if he felt himself too secure; I've a good mind to plague him well by flirting with somebody else, and there are plenty would be glad enough. Do tell me what you think, will you, Hernana? There you sit, looking with such an odd face, not saying a word to comfort me—*so* different from Harriet Manvers."

"I really do not know what to say—because—because I have not seen you much together; but I own by your account, I do not think Mr. Philip Gorhambury is attached to you."

"Oh, you don't—don't you?" in a voice of pique. "Then perhaps you think he is attached to some one else. You, for instance?"

"Oh, not to me!" replied Hernana faintly.

"I should think not. *You*, of all people in the world! Well, that is the last thing I should suspect Philip Gorhambury of. Take my word for it, love in a cottage, is not Philip Gorhambury's taste. The delightful creature, he deserves a palace, and he knows he does, and I am only afraid he flies too high for poor me—but I protest you look uncommon odd. You are not in love with him yourself, I do hope, Hernana? That *would* be wretched work for you!"

"Oh, don't trouble yourself about me. I am used to take care of myself."

"That's it, however," said Maria, lowering her voice. "That's my secret fear—that he is flying at higher game than me; for you cannot think how excessively he is flattered and admired; and then, besides, he will have such a fine fortune you know, and though Mr. Gorhambury is a horrid, odd sort of a reserved savage, that nobody likes, everybody's excessively charmed with Mrs. Gorhambury; she is the most accomplished creature in the world.

So he really might choose where he pleased, and I should not think of hoping about it, if it were not for little looks, and signs, and speeches, that one cannot misunderstand, and which convince me he loves none but me. But, oh! how shall I bring him to declare himself? for Harriet Manvers says, every man on earth wants a landing-net, and I am sure Lady Maria will never take the trouble to handle one for me."

This somewhat vapid conversation is given as a specimen of various conversations of the same nature, which took place between Hernana and Maria, during the short interval of time which elapsed before Mr. Lovel, his daughter, and Lady Aylmer set out upon their journey.

Though beginning with the most absolute disbelief in the existence of any partiality upon the part of Philip towards Miss Westmore, as these revelations proceeded and became rather more

detailed, the wretched Hernana could not conceal from herself that either Maria, misled by her wishes, exaggerated very much, or that Philip was behaving excessively ill to them both; playing a false and treacherous game, the temptations to which, the more she reflected upon them, the less she could understand.

It was easy to believe that his fancy might have been attracted by the pretty face of Maria, and by her unaffected, though rather childish manners; but if so, why did he make any reserve or difficulty about declaring his passion and making proposals for a marriage, which it was plain would be the most agreeable thing in the world to all parties concerned? And oh! if loving and thinking of another, how could he—how dare he—have been, what during her whole life he had more or less been to her—and most of all throughout these last few weeks so dear and precious to her memory?

Could those looks, those tones, those little bursts of involuntary feeling; those broken sentences, half uttered, half called back; those

innumerable tokens which the heart alone understands—oh! could all these have been only a mockery? Could Philip Gorhambury be such a vile, heartless, practised deceiver as that would amount to? Impossible!

No, he loved her! he must love her! But then, Maria! In that case, how account for his conduct to her; for make what allowances she would for Maria's wish to be deceived, still there was no denying that much which she had related had an appearance of truth. Her wretchedness was extreme.

She knew not what to think—what to do. Her feelings were all in confusion. At times abandoned to that intense longing for a happiness which seemed to have been once within her grasp, but was now withdrawn! Or was it really withdrawn? The doubt, the suspense, was what so hampered her feelings. Doubt! Terrible doubt!

Could she but have come to some conclusion —could she but have been convinced, either of Philip's truth, or of his infidelity, as she thought,

she could have borne it. One great struggle, and she felt she should have resolution to disentangle her heart. One bold blow of severance! and, though it would have been bitter as the stroke of death, it would have been over; and from that time forth her cure would begin. Time, which could do nothing for her now, would do everything for her then; as day passed after day, she must, in spite of herself, become better

Ah! it is uncertainty—cruel, wearing, helpless, uncertainty—which robs so many a cheek of its colour, and fades and withers so many a form.

Those who can end this horrid suspense when they will, are little aware of the tortures they inflict, when, sometimes heedlessly, sometimes through self-distrust, sometimes with pre-meditation, they occasion them.

CHAPTER XI.

"My child," said Lady Aylmer, as Hernana entered her little drawing-room, "what *does* ail you? My love, I fear you have tried your strength too far, in these unremitting attentions to your dear father. I thought you looked ill some days ago; but since Friday the change for the worse has been frightfully rapid. You are altered in a manner that alarms me. Come here, dear child of my heart. Kind and good Hernana, come here, and lay your head against this poor aching bosom of mine, and tell me, my love, what it is; or shall I?—shall I?" She went on, after having gazed upon

the wan, worn countenance for a few moments with unspeakable anxiety and affection: "Shall I—not ask, but guess—venture to guess, my darling?"

And she took her hand, with that expression of deep feeling and sympathy upon her countenance, which no countenance was more fitted to express than Lady Aylmer's, for her long, long sorrow, the heart wound she carried within, and which time seemed unable to soften, would seem to have moulded her features into something most refined and spiritual, and singularly calculated to express every emotion of the soul.

The character of the face was so tender as it looked at Hernana, the sympathy with sorrow so sincere — sympathy, such as those who have known much silent and deep-seated sorrow, are alone, perhaps, capable of feeling!

Lady Aylmer was one of the most interesting, as she was the most consoling of friends and comforters.

"Nay, do not turn your head away," which

had been Hernana's first natural impulse, but she did not yield to it; she fixed her eyes upon those of her friend—eyes so full of sadness—that they seemed to acknowledge that she had guessed right—to acknowledge that Lady Aylmer was in possession of her secret. "Is it so? I was afraid. Nay, I do not know why I should say I was afraid, except from, perhaps, a natural misgiving, where that name to me so fatal, is engaged; but I would not be prejudiced against the son by my dislike of the parents. You may trust me, Hernana. I can and I will love Philip Gorhambury for your sake. If—but why do you look so sad? It cannot be possible that after all I saw, little as that might be — but enough — it cannot be possible that he is gone. But I hear that he *is* gone, and has left you still in uncertainty as to his intentions!"

Hernana made no reply. She sat down upon the sofa where Lady Aylmer was still forced for the greater part of the day to recline, though, in the ardour of her conversation, she had

half risen from it, and was now sitting up, and continued to hold Hernana's hand, and gaze at her with the most affectionate anxiety.

"You do not speak! Nay, surely, my love, I hope it cannot be so."

"Yes, it is so," was all Hernana could reply.

"You cannot mean it! Gone! and said nothing! But it must be for a very short time, then. He must very soon be intending to return?"

"I do not know. No, I think Mrs. Gorhambury said the time of his return was quite uncertain: he was away for she knew not how long."

"Mrs. Gorhambury! My dear, never mind what Mrs. Gorhambury says: we all know *her*. She will not hesitate at endeavouring to make you believe that to be true which she wishes to be true. If from Mrs. Gorhambury alone you have heard that Philip has gone away in this strange, inexplicable manner, (for a long time, and without explaining himself), depend upon it she deceives you, and perhaps herself;

for Philip Gorhambury loves you, Hernana. I am not, I think, a self-flatterer, nor very apt to flatter my friends; and experience has made me very distrustful of those appearances by which girls are led to persuade themselves that a man is seriously attached to them. But I do not think I am deceived here; I could stake my life upon it, that man loves you."

Hernana did not speak, but she turned her eyes upon her friend with such a sudden flash of joy.

"And so tell me, my dear, how you parted; for I feel sure he could not part from you, without betraying, by some word or look, what was to be read in every glance, and heard trembling in every sentence, when I saw you together. Come, come — I know that mere absence throws one into such low spirits, that it gives a dark colour to everything. Alas! I know it all so well! I have tried it all so truly! and I seem to live it over again in you, my dear, dear girl."

"He did not take leave. He went away

without even trying to see me, suddenly, and so unkindly! How could he—how could he have so little feeling for me?"

"Went away without taking leave of you?"

"Ah, Lady Aylmer!"

"My dear child!"

"You could not speak with such confidence of his attachment *now?*" said Hernana, gloomily.

"My own love! I do not know what to think or say."

"You think it, then, so very strange, so very unkind, so—so significant?"

She uttered the last word as if she could hardly articulate it.

"Alas! my own dear child, what *can* I say?"

"It seems," resumed Lady Aylmer, after the pause of a few moments, "as if I must have little stability of judgment, to change my opinion so suddenly, and, as some might think, on such light grounds; but I will not disguise what I think from you, my child;

for I know you have a brave and magnanimous heart, and that you know a woman's duty—her hard, but her most imperative duty! My Hernana will not sacrifice a life given her for high purposes—will not make the misery of those who love her, for the sake of such a one as this is. You are a noble, good girl, Hernana: you must think of this man no more."

She made no answer.

"That sounds to you like the sentence of death," said Lady Aylmer.

"It does; and worse! far worse!"

"I know it; I know it! What is physical death—once and over—to the *living* death of the heart? that death which does not kill! Ah, child! child! I know it too well. It is here, here—hope dead! happiness dead! love dead! everything dead! Everything dead, but one's miserable self."

"Yes—I see, I understand; but do not say *you* have no hope—oh, do not say that. I thought you lived upon hope."

"Upon the shadow of it—yes; but it is a shadow that grows fainter and fainter every day; and, indeed, it is beginning, of late, to take strange fantastic forms of misery!" Lady Aylmer went on to say, not in heartless forgetfulness of the younger heart's sorrows, but willing to divert their bitterness by sympathy with her own—"of late, to take strange fantastic forms of misery. For him that I lost—a lovely child—is by this time a child no more: he is a boy—a man!—and so I never, never can find my lost, my darling little one again! And then, when I think to what he may have been exposed—what a boy, what a man he may have become!—what I may find, if ever I do find—oh, it is hideous! hideous!"

And the wretched mother, now entirely absorbed with her own anguished reflections, covered her eyes with her hands, as if to shut out some dreadful image.

Love is a strange, strange thing. However intense and bitter the sufferings, it seems to shrink ashamed before more substantial sorrows. It

seems aware of its own somewhat evanescent nature, and stronger than death itself, in its passionate anguish to stand abashed, when the voice of other grief is heard. Rachel mourning for her children! What love complaint would dare mingle itself with the horror of that sound? Can Hero dare to weep, when Niobe is there? So Hernana felt: ashamed of her sorrow, abashed, and as if conscience-stricken before the heart's cry of that wretched mother.

The feeling was salutary. A new current was given to her thoughts, before the dreadful anxieties and uncertainties of the bereaved mother, her griefs appeared as trifling—as nothing. Yet her anguish was, in truth, as acute, more acute, more agonising, if possible. Yet there was, I know not what, wanting. But I will not attempt to account for the fact; satisfied that the experience of every heart that feels will bear me out in it.

Lady Aylmer sat, her face covered with her hands, a prey to one of those paroxysms of grief and horror by which she was overwhelmed,

whenever the idea of her lost child was presented to her in this, the most wretched of all its varying aspects of wretchedness; for, happily, no sorrow of this nature can take a permanent aspect, it changes with the spirits, sometimes hope predominating, sometimes sinking into the depths of despair; but at least the misery of a fixed idea is thus escaped, and the mind preserved from madness. The presence of actual sorrow in another shape, was here useful to the poor mother, as to the love-crossed girl. Both hearts were so really generous and good, that their sympathy was a help to each other.

"It is very selfish of me," said Lady Aylmer, raising her head. "How can I be so selfish? Dearest girl, forgive me! There are moments, when that idea presents itself, when all the little fortitude I have gives way. And, as time rolls on, I fancy him growing and changing—growing and changing. That thought gets more and more persistent—more and more terrible. Oh! forgive me, my love, I am very selfish! and, with your pale cheek before me,

can I think of anything—anything else? My own, dear girl, forgive me."

"Ah! Lady Aylmer, do not speak so. If you knew how ashamed I feel of my grief in the presence of your awful sorrow. But I will bear my portion as I ought—indeed, indeed, I will! I am not going to be a burden upon your spirits, or a source of sorrow and anxiety to my dear father. No, believe me; I can, and I will."

Yes, the presence of this awful sorrow, as well she might call it, brought her back at once from those regions of passion into which, under the fascinations of Philip Gorhambury, she had been wandering, restoring her to reality, to duty, to goodness, to resignation, and the wholesome everyday life.

Yes, that was the harassing anxiety, the

dark and terrible idea, which had gradually been gaining strength in Lady Aylmer's mind, and every year added to the sum of accumulated pain. For a long time she had continued to think of her lost one as still the little, innocent, helpless, beautiful, baby-boy. She had still clung firmly to the idea that he would be restored to her, and restored much as she had lost him.

But time wore away, weeks accumulated into months, and months into years, and still not the slightest tidings of him reached her. The silence of the grave seemed indeed to have closed over him, and every one of her friends were so convinced that this was really the case, that their looks of sad despair, when she would speak of him as still living, and a something bordering upon disapprobation, which she could detect, as if she were indulging in a dangerously morbid fancy, were so disagreeable to her, that for some time

she had ceased to mention him to any one but Hernana.

Not that her faith was in the least impaired. She calculated upon his reappearance with that sort of absolute certainty, which make some of our previsions assume all the reality of prophecy; and it was the consolation of her life that this faith, she had been able to impart to Hernana, who, young and sanguine, was ready to believe what she so ardently desired might prove true.

But since the painful ideas above alluded to had taken possession of Lady Aylmer's mind, even this long cherished hope ceased to be a consolation. The dreadful idea that this child so ardently desired, might, exposed to every possible evil influence, be growing up a wretched, perverted human being, was so horrible, that at times the most fervent prayer that Hernana could offer for her friend was, that all these fluctuations of hope and

terror might be merged in the assurance, in some way or other, that the child had perished in his infancy.

It was but a melancholy party that at length set out upon the expedition to Cornwall. Mr. Lovel so ill, and, added to the present suffering, there was occasion for the most serious anxiety as regarded the future, it seeming to be very doubtful, whether he would ever be enabled to resume his duties. In that case, what was to become of them? If that resource failed him, what were they to do? Besides, he loved his profession; his whole heart and soul were devoted to it; life seemed to have lost all interest and purpose when he could no longer do good.

Lady Aylmer was more than usually depressed: she felt low at removing from G——.

It was painful to go so much further from the spot where her child had disappeared, and where she still hoped he might one day or other reappear; and yet, on the contrary, when she thought of the distant secluded country to which they were bound, she cherished some faint, vague expectation, that there, among its mysterious wilds, she might hear of him.

These things made her silent, sad and preoccupied. The mood of these her companions allowed Hernana, however, more leisure and quiet for the battle with her heart in which she had engaged, and so far perhaps was well. That conversation with Lady Aylmer, a comparison of her own sorrow, with the dreadful anxieties of her friend, and still more with the depression and melancholy of her father, helped her. It aroused all that was generous within her heart to the resolve that she would not prove a burden to those already so heavily

burdened. She knew it was vain to talk, but so long as she should indulge herself in these sad regrets, these intense longings after happiness, she could be neither of service nor of consolation to those who so greatly needed both. Pity, and a generous desire to comfort and support those she loved, rescued her from the depression into which she had at first fallen. She shook off the insidious weakness that had invaded her, and resolved to look her situation courageously in the face.

Days had passed, and weeks had passed, and Philip Gorhambury had not returned, neither had he written one line to her. His mother got a letter now and then, the contents of which she communicated at the Deanery, and through Maria, Hernana learned that he was passing his time in the gayest manner, and that he was thinking of nothing less than returning home. He talked of proceeding direct to Paris, and of his mother joining him there, but

did not appear to have the least intention of visiting G—— before his departure.

Maria spent her time, when with Hernana, partly in lamentations, partly in fits of anger. Sometimes she grieved over her own want of power to fix the dear deluder; at others, inveighed against the selfish inconstancy of man.

Hernana did her best to console her, and to encourage her to persist in the efforts she professed to be making to drive the deceiver from her thoughts; and as she did so, she laid the lesson to her own heart.

And so we will leave her in the exercise of the true and cardinal virtue of woman —that of ruling the tender affections with courage and severity. Denying herself every vain indulgence of self-flattery, she resolutely drove from her memory those recollections of tones and looks which had deceived

her. She steadily held before her eyes the facts of the case—that he was gone, when he might have staid, a voluntary exile from the place where, if he truly loved, he would most upon earth have desired to remain. That he had not spoken, when there was nothing to prevent him speaking; had not written, when there was nothing to prevent him writing—nothing, except his own ambition and worldliness, and the ambition and worldliness of his mother. If these were enough to prevent him doing that which truth, and honour, and affection so imperiously commanded him to do, what was there left to hope, or even to wish?

If such was his character, why vainly expect it would change? Character does not change. As well may you wait till the river ceases to flow, as wait for a man to alter from what he is.

Such were the things she said to herself; and she fought the hard fight, and fought it

bravely and well. She was one resting firmly too upon that best of strengths—the cheerful confidence that we live actually, really, and unfailingly, under a government merciful and good, far — far above the things of this world.

We will leave her then to the sharp contest with herself, and to the performance of the pious duties to which she is devoted—and we will return to the child, who *we* know lives, and is surrounded by physical and moral peril, greater than the darkest imagination of the mother could have pictured.

CHAPTER XII.

Years have passed away. The scene has changed with them. The gipsies have wandered far and near; have visited almost every green lane and barren moor in the island; and are now encamped in one of those deep, secluded valleys which lie upon the southern coast of Kent and Sussex.

The hills in this part of the country are steep and abrupt, running in long parallel lines, bare of all foliage, and covered over with short grass, or heath. Between them lie those deep and narrow valleys, which seem almost cut off from all communication with the rest of the world.

As the road traverses the heights, you look down into these secluded nooks, where perhaps a few tall trees surround the small parish church, with its low, square tower, and humble roof; round which, a farm-house or two, and a few cottages may be seen nestling. Sometimes the course of a stream may be traced through the valley; but most often, this is not the case.

There they lie, these little villages, looking so solitary, so obscure! very lodges in the surrounding wilderness.

These valleys were favourite haunts of the gipsies. They loved the seclusion in which they could remain hidden, and the wide expanse of country which they could traverse in pursuit of their various occupations; and most of all, they loved the peculiar opportunities for engaging in smuggling transactions—then at their height, for it was during the long war.

Claribert of Avon is now a youth of about sixteen; Big Ben is a man of twenty; Hesther, though comparatively young in years, is

become quite a withered old woman. The consuming fire within seems to have burnt away all of youth, of human feeling, and almost all of human substance that was in her.

This is the first time she has ventured to quit the desolate mountains, extending from Lancashire to the south of Scotland, where she and her tribe had sojourned for so many years in the trackless wilderness, concealed from the pursuit so long kept up by Lady Aylmer, now in utter despair almost abandoned. The security has been so complete, the tradition of the story has so long faded into silence, that it had died away almost from the memory of the tribe itself.

There were moments when some action out of the common, some look, some gesture, the flashing blue eye, and the golden hair, reminded an old crone of an old story; but nothing was said. The tribe is busy with its own affairs—its fortune-telling, its horse-jockeying, and its various other schemes, more or less honest, in

pursuit of gain. The stranger ceases to be regarded in particular. He has long circulated among the boys of the tribe, as if one of them; for Hesther has grown languid and dispirited; her fervour and energy have forsaken her; and she ceases to claim for her adopted son those privileges and immunities for which she once strove so fiercely. Whether it were that the restless gnawing of conscience within had worn away all of pride that once mingled with her affection, or whether that the dread which for ever haunted her, that he might be torn away, rendered her content, and even desirous, as he grew older, that he should mingle with the common herd, I cannot say; but certainly, during the whole of this period of his life, Charlie has been allowed to mingle indiscriminately with the rest.

There the encampment lies before you. About half a dozen magnificent elms and beeches form a sort of irregular semi-circle round a green unenclosed spot, removed about a quarter of a mile from the village. A

rippling brook, running between the long and verdant grass, over bright blue and golden pebbles, trinkles down this valley, the neighbourhood of fresh water being what these gipsies, above all things, loved. Their tents, or, rather hovels, are pitched irregularly about the little plain, in the centre of which, and down the lane into which it gradually narrows, rough, ragged horses and asses are scattered about browsing. Sundry carts, covered and uncovered, were drawn up, with their shafts in the air, round about.

The evening twilight has already fallen in the valley, though the sun elsewhere is yet above the horizon. The gipsy fires are lighted, and their lurid flames and smoke rise and mingle not unpleasingly with the topmost branches of the trees.

The yelp of the numerous dogs; the hoarse voices of men and boys; the shrill tones of the women; and the laughter, now and then, of the children, mingle with the other sounds in a sort of stilly confusion.

The people are assembled in groups, and seem busily engaged in the discussion of some subject which occupies all their attention. Rapid conversation is going on, and from time to time different individuals may be seen detaching themselves from the several groups, and going towards the entrance of the deep lane which leads between high hedges into the far country. They seem to be looking down it, as if in expectation of an arrival; but no one comes.

Disappointed they return to the fires, from one of which the voice of lamentation is heard. A giantess of a woman, with skin the colour of bronze, long tresses of black dishevelled hair, hanging in volumes round her face, huge, sinewy arms, and the shoulders of a female Hercules, is venting her grief, mingling her sorrow with execrations.

"To think of him! My Ben, of all! The last I should have thought as ever would have been taken, so 'cute as he was! Never found out in a trick in his life! No; there wasn't one of you understood the sly like him; to say

nothing of his good brawny arm; except, indeed, that white-haired, white-livered chick of a lad, who goes sneaking about, and doing nobody knows what, and saying nobody cares what; half hypocrite, half thief! He's better on the sly than my Ben himself; a young rascal! and I'll be hanged if he han't a hand in getting my Ben into this brostle, for all the fine face he puts upon it!"

"What are you saying there?" exclaims a low, stern, hoarse, hollow voice, which comes as if from the sepulchre. It has that tone which tells of decaying physical life within, when the life of the soul still burns with all its brightness. From the worn, thin spectre of a tall, dark, wasted woman, one bright hectic spot upon either cheek, and eyes whose gloomy darkness is all now lighted up with rage, it proceeds: "What are you saying there? What are you saying of my Charlie? Say it again! say it again, if you dare! You know he is an angel of light, come down, nobody knows how, here, among the

fiends of the pit, and you dare compare him with your ruffian, Ben!"

"I do, and I dare! Better be a bold, brave ruffian, and defy the law, than a fair-faced, smooth-tongued, sneaking hypocrite, who'll take care of his own skin, and keep his own neck out of the noose, let who will suffer for it! Ay, Hesther, you may glare, and flame, and look, as I'll be bound you did when you gripped I know who; but I've said it once, and I'll say it again, —villain for villain, cheat for cheat, thief for thief, better ten hundred thousand times be a bold, honest villain, a bold, honest cheat, a bold, honest thief, passing for what he is, and no better than he is, like my Ben, than a crouching, praying, psalm-singing hypocrite, like your fine gentleman, prying and prowling about, nobody knows where or for what; and all the time being as 'cute with the hand, and as ready upon the sly as any thief engro' among us!

"You lie!" cried Hesther, furiously, "you lie! Charlie is no thief; Charlie is no cheat; Charlie is no vile poisoner of pigs, and filcher

of ducks and fowls! Fine things to boast of, if boast you must! He! he never took so much as the value of a hair, which was not his own; and what is he doing now? What is he doing now? whilst all the rest of you are crowding round your flesh-pots of Egypt here. What? but gone down to the town amid the thick of them all, to see his friend righted. Maybe they've taken him up, too, and sent him to prison, for who knows what one of them fine magistrates may do? but none of them can prove that, which never was; and his pure blood speaks in his cheek before the world!"

"It does, does it? Mighty pure! See, if he don't bamboozle Hesther, as well as the rest of ye, with his double tongue and looks? But he can't take in *me*; he can't take in me!" repeated the gipsy, shaking her head ominously.

The debate was interrupted just as Hesther was about to make an indignant reply, by a general shout; and a thin, slender figure, somewhat but not much above the middle size, was

seen by the moonlight, slowly approaching up the lane.

"Here he comes at last! here he comes at last! What cheer? what fare?"

The figure was still at some distance when these eager voices saluted him, and heads were stretched forth, and eyes starting almost out of their sockets with eagerness, as the mingled crowd of men, women, and boys, looked down the lane.

It was a close green lane, with high banks, between which, under the wear and tear of ages, the way had sunk many feet below the surface of the surrounding country. The banks were ornamented with daisies, jasmines, and violets, the honey-suckle climbed aloft, waving her sweet head to the breeze, and strayed among the stout branches of hazel and willow, that now shot upwards, now across the lane, embowering it, at intervals, and flinging heavy masses of shadow, amid the bright gleams of the moonlight.

Up this beautiful lane the youth slowly

advanced; his air was deeply depressed and melancholy. Hesther had followed with the rest; had, as was her custom, pushed her way imperiously through the throng of busy faces, and stood leaning against a green knoll of earth, watching the approach of Charlie. His eyes were bent upon the ground; he seemed moody, thoughtful, and unhappy; but, as the loud shouts of his assembled fellows greeted him, he raised his head, looked forward, quickened his pace, and was soon among them. They gathered round him thick as bees, with faces eagerly lifted up to his.

"Well, well, what cheer? What did you do? Where did you go? Did you see the bigwigs? speak to his worship himself? And what did his reverend worship say?"

These, uttered in a half-feigned, half-genuine tone of contempt, were the sentences which greeted him upon every side. They left him no time to answer; yet was he about to speak, when the tall woman, seizing him rudely by

the arm, and griping it as if she would make her fingers meet in the flesh, said, in a tone of scornful reproach:

"You haven't brought him back with you, then?"

"No, mother," turning upon her that beautiful fair face, so full of majesty and serenity. "No, mother; they would not let him go."

"Wouldn't! oh, we wait upon would and could. Didn't like it, eh? So, that is all you got for your fine daring, thrusting your head into the lion's mouth—into his worship's own parlour—is it? I thought how it would be."

"Mother, you know I could not help it. You know I would have done it if I could," replied the youth, with some emotion. "You *know* I would if I could; but oh, mother—!"

"Well! speak out, can't you? What have they done with my brave, Big Ben?"

"Mother, he is committed."

"Committed!" shrieked the gipsy, "my own Big Ben! my brave, free bird of the woods!

my wild youngster of the moors—committed! Between four walls, and the sweet air of heaven, and the sky, and the sun, and the fields, and the trees, all shut out! In a baleful dungeon! and the irons on him—the irons on him! Oh, Ben! my Ben! my own, own Ben! What hast thou done? what hast thou done?"

The youth looked down, and shame and grief were written in his fair face, but he said nothing.

"If he had been rich, the foul wretches, would they not have admitted him to bail? If he'd been one of them Gorgios—a gentle like, with a cambric shirt and a fine coat on his back, wouldn't they have admitted him to bail? See if they wouldn't have. No four walls for them! No; they'd have— But why, you lazy, stupid ass," turning fiercely to Charlie, "why could your smooth tongue not find a word to say for him? I warrant you could have found more words than enough to get him set at liberty if you had pleased?"

"No," said Charlie, gently disengaging him-

self from her gripe, "no, I could have said nothing."

An expression of the deepest grief, shame, and mortification mingled, were visible upon his face whilst he spoke.

"You could have said *nothing!* you could have said nothing in his defence! Nothing?"

"No; because the accusation was *true.*"

He uttered this in so low a voice that the meaning reached only herself.

"True! what do you mean, you winney-looking coward, by that? What *accusation*, if you please, since such fine long words is the go? What, but he'd pocketted an apple, or, may be, taken an egg out of a hen's nest in a hedge! that's the sum of the mighty *accusation*, if we must all learn sitcher fine words! And it was *true*, was it?"

Charlie only shook his head mournfully, but said no more. The curious crowd would leave him to Big Ben's mother no longer; they began to press, and squeeze, and jostle about him, overwhelming him with questions as to what

was become of their favourite and champion, the Samson of the band.

The answers were given painfully and reluctantly; and yet it was plain that there was something more than the mere sorrowful fact of Big Ben having been committed to prison, which weighed so heavily upon the youth's heart.

"Did you follow him to prison? Did you see my bold boy in his cage, at least? his cage! beating his wings, poor hawk of the wilderness, against the wires. Did you care, or heed, or think to do so much as that?—visit him in his cage—Master Primrosy-face."

"Yes," said Charlie, "I followed in the crowd as they took him to prison."

"And where did they lodge him? My darling bird of the mountain."

"Literally in the cage," said Charlie, with a faint melancholy smile.

"Shame! shame!" resounded on all sides. "I know the cage," cries one.

"Ay, aye, you have tasted the inside of it

yourself, and all for an old white hen as tough as a halter!" cries another.

At which last sally there was a general laugh.

"And I say, it would be a black shame to put a Christian vagabond, far more a bold child of Egypt, into such a hole as that."

"It *is* a hole," repeated Charlie.

"Ay, is it?" cried the mother, again pushing forward, seizing his arm, and fixing her flashing eyes upon his face, but with less of animosity than impatience this time; "then you *did* go in, after all; you did follow my child to his dungeon? That's not so bad of him, Hesther, either, is it?"

"I should think not," said Hesther scornfully.

"But what sort of a place is it? Tell me, and is my lad in a dungeon, and is he in irons?"

"I'm surprised you can be asking such childish questions, Bet," interposed a man. "Why only to hear the sweet innocent, one

would think as how it had never tasted a prison itself."

At which there was another general laugh; to which Bet only responded by giving a furious scowl round. But Charlie answered gently, saying:

"It's not a dungeon, not under ground; but it is cold, and hard, and sadly small, with a stone floor, and only a stone bench to rest on. That is as well as I could see through the window, which is barred and cross-bound over."

"The window! See through the window! Then it's not one o' those confounded courts, with high walls, and big gates, enough to make one's heart die within one, only to look at them! How did you get at the window?"

"The window looks into the street."

"And Ben can put his face to one side, and you can glue yours to the other?"

She waited for no answer: she turned away, and the next moment might be seen striding through the flickering moonlight of the green lane, a giant, threatening figure.

No sooner was she gone, than the interest taken in the fate of Big Ben, which had caused every one to hurry from their untasted suppers, began to subside before the calls of appetite. The group began to break up, and individuals to betake themselves to their fires, where the seething pot was bubbling temptingly, every now and then giving evidence of hidden treasures, as one substance after another rose to the surface; whilst an odorous savour of very good things, was diffused through the air.

True flesh-pots of Egypt were these.

The misfortunes of poor Ben were forgotten in the hurry and avidity, with which each seized upon, and began to devour his portion of the mess, such as that with which the immortal Meg Merrilies regaled the not less immortal Dominie. They sat upon the turf round their crackling fires, and from beechen platters of their own fashioning, helped themselves with wooden spoons of their own manufacturing. They laughed and gossipped, and boasted and

defied, and told wild stories of the life of the road, as they called it, of hair-breadth escapes, ingenious thefts and devices, scoffing at and deriding the civilized life they despised, relating tales directed to the bringing all that is reverend, but more especially their worshipfuls the magistrates, into ridicule; and defying, to use their own phrase, "the devil and Doctor Faustus."

So they laughed and chatted in good fellowship at least, if in nothing else good.

But Charlie sat apart with Hesther.

CHAPTER XIII.

They sat apart by the door of their hut, and beside a fire which, low and smouldering through its embers, still gave forth a fervent heat. Hesther sat there, supporting her elbows upon her raised knees, and her face upon her hands.

Her black hair fell in masses over hands and face, but did not cover her eyes; which burning like two urid lamps in the gloom of a sepulchre, might be seen shining ominously between her fingers.

She was watching her foster-son, who sat upon the opposite side of the fire. His arms were folded, his head sinking upon his breast; he was lost in what was evidently, most painful rumination.

Long did Hesther gaze at him with those deep, gloomy, thoughtful eyes of hers; in profound silence she sat and gazed. She loved to do so. There was nothing she loved so well as to sit perfectly still, and pass away her life, as it were, gazing at Claribert. She has sat by his side, when wearied he has thrown himself upon the turf and fallen asleep—motionless, gazing for hours and hours.

Watching, not so much to ward him from evil, for all her old terrors for his safety, or her still greater fears of being robbed of him, had long subsided — but simply to gaze, to feed her doting, aching affection with his beauty, with his image !

And so she sat now, watching him. But there was anxiety and sympathy mingled at this

time with the fascination, that was wont to rivet her eyes upon that face. Claribert was evidently wretched.

They sat long in this silence—a length of time that would have worn out our patience; but the denizen of the woods is patient, and silent, and brooding. It might be a couple of hours that thus passed away, and the night was now far advanced. One by one the fires of the encampment had gone out, and the trees no longer umbered by their light, raised their tall, giant tops black against the sky, which was all alive with large, glittering stars, twinkling in their everlasting motion, as if pouring forth light from their urns.

Hesther at last spoke.

"Charlie," she said, "what ails you? Sorry you are, that Big Ben is in the cage, I know that—for you loved him, more than was need—more than was need, perhaps. But something other is plaguing you now. I know your face—there, Hesther has read it since you were

a blessed infant! Strange looks it has—things in it I see, that it is not for such as Hesther to understand. Lines from that other world, I don't know their speech. They are too bright and beautiful for Hesther's eyes, deep mysteries are they to me; and now, thy looks are a mystery too, Charlie, only this I can discern, that something ails thee—something more than common ails thee!"

He lifted up his head and raised his eyes. Those beautiful, pure, eyes, in which, indeed, you saw a world of wild, and lofty, and spiritual thought—beautiful in truth, transcendantly beautiful!

Such was their beauty, so penetrating, so sublime, that no one, be he who he might, could look upon those eyes unmoved. How much less she, thus strangely witched by the rare Saxon beauty, so foreign to her race.

"Yes, Hesther," he said, "there *is* something working here. It has been stirring long, but

this day, this night, the something within me seems coming to a crisis. There is great pain and anguish—terrible pain and anguish—but I feel, I do feel, that when this is gone through, something better will come, something better *must* come—things cannot, shall not, must not go on so any longer."

"What do you mean?—what do you mean?" she was always ready to take alarm, when the one, to her most fearful subject, was approached. "This life can't go on—mustn't go on? What do you mean? What other life would you have? What other life are you fit for? What other life is there for you? Can't, shan't, musn't go on! What do you mean?"

"Mean! Oh, Hesther! do you know? I thought, fool and blind!—they blinded me—willing to be blinded!—I thought it was in little things—I suffered my conscience to be hoodwinked. I thought it was only in little things; but, day by day, it has been coming clearer and clearer upon me, just as the sun rises and rises;

and suddenly there is a great burst of light, and one sees all at once—blue mountains, and rivers, and castles, and trees, and flowers, where everything before was mistiness and confusion! For the first time, now I see it! I see it! I had glimmerings before; but this last!—oh, it has burst it all open before me at once! Little, and daily! little, and daily!—fed in it, cradled in it, nursed in it, reared in it!—one and all, one and all pilfering, and over-reaching, and wronging, and defrauding!—deceit being like the very air in which all breathe; bad air, poisonous, corrupting, and defiling!—then blackening, till all is black! And now all this has brought forth its fruit—ripened it with its poisonous breath! just as I've seen a great stem of deadly nightshade growing up rank and venomous in a dunghill heap. Yes, it's come to fruit at last! Ben, Big Ben, is sent to gaol for a horrid, horrid crime!"

"Nay, then," cried Hesther, "I never thought that of Ben. I never thought he was bad—he would do like the rest of them, no doubt

—but no such great harm in that; but I never thought Ben would do what you call a crime."

"No such great harm," cried he; "no such great harm! Ay, that it is—that it is. I see it now. No such great harm! no such great harm! Oh, that is like the heap of leaves!—each a little thing, but one put to another, there is a great heap—a great putrid mass, upon which the deadly nightshade grows."

His were the accents of despair.

"Well, well, never mind. Don't fret and vex yourself. Little leaves or big leaves, deadly nightshade or not, *you* never carried one least leaf to the heap—never one, never one; no, not the smallest one: *I* took good care of that!" cried Hesther, in a voice of exultation.

"But if I did not, haven't I stood by and seen others do it? Add leaf to leaf!—leaf to leaf!"

"Well, and didn't you try to prevent 'em? as if even *you* could—as if an angel from heaven could! Oh, don't go and worry your-

self about what you couldn't help! As well try to roll these hills back into the sea."

"That has done till now!" he cried; and a sudden brightness, as of one inspired, flashed into his face; "that may have done till now; it has done. Someway I was satisfied with it, but I am satisfied no longer. Oh! for the sake of that wretched man, who's fallen into this crime, and of all he said about it—for I heard him: 'Beginnings of bad beginnings'—for his sake, something must be done —something *shall* be done. There must be better things going on somewhere. That dim, misty feeling, which you call nonsense, is *not* nonsense. Though you take care to keep me, and have always kept me, a wanderer in these wild places, there are better things, I feel sure. Why, that very church behind those trees—those decent farm-houses there—those decent people! It comes to me now! It is as if my eyes were suddenly opened — how can they have been shut so long? These poor creatures that we live among! There is a better life all

around us! everywhere around us! All people are not like these wretched, beggarly, cheats and swindlers—pilferers of hen-houses and hedges, living like beasts in dens and coverts—worse than beasts, living in wrong and baseness! And it must not be! My people! (if they *are* my people) it shall not be! Something I must do—I don't know what; but there is like a voice speaking and crying within me! Something must be done—I know not exactly what; but something must be done, to save myself and all of them."

"Save them! Save them from what? Child, you are gone mad this evening."

"No, no! I feel strangely, but I'm not mad, Hesther—not mad! Save them from what? Why from their misery and their wickedness."

And then as a gust of wind suddenly raised, as suddenly lulls, and down falls the gentle rain, the wild vehemence of the moment gave way, and down gushed a torrent of tears.

———

The mind and character of the unfortunate boy had lately been in fearful peril. From some of the expressions which in his distress he let fall, the real state of the case may be surmised.

It was not possible that, surrounded as he was by some of the most contemptible, if not the most hideous, forms of depravity and degradation, he could have long preserved untainted the purity and elevation of his principles. The dishonesty as regarded small things which was daily practised around him, could no longer escape his observation: what it was easy to hide from the undiscerning child, was betrayed by degrees to the discerning boy. The shock and disgust he at first felt could not but be in danger of gradually wearing away, living as he did in hourly and amicable association with those who practised these things.

That fatal habit of disregarding the wrong and the right in small things, was stealing upon him, and though never once had he sullied the innocence of his heart by wrong or dishonesty

in the minutest particular, yet he associated daily, and with pleasure, with those who did. The forbidden thing was in the camp, and he had ceased to denounce it.

He was getting accustomed to look upon such things as inevitable evils, and to regard his own scruples rather as needless refinements, than as everlasting truths.

Happily before the leaven had worked so far as vitally to change the pure substance upon which it had to act, the crime and consequent arrest of his friend Big Ben had aroused him, as from sleep, and awakened him to a vivid, almost transcendental perception of the situation in which they were all standing, and a horror, as of great distress, fell upon his soul.

All within was yet struggling confusion. He saw but he could not distinguish. He had sharp, fearful perceptions of evil, but they were like the pain of one dreaming, who cannot seize upon its object.

He saw that all around him was wrong,

hideously wrong, but where should he find the right?

Oh for the day-star to arise with healing on its wings! Scattering these obscure shadows, and making the night spectres flee before its brightness.

It did arrive at last.

Its beams shining over the heavens, visited this humble and darkened corner of this poor little earth of ours.

———

Under the pressure of his new thoughts and emotions, Charlie became as solitary as he had been when a child. He spent his time wandering alone over the downs that stretched far upon every side; sometimes sitting on the highest crest of a hill, gazing over the vast expanse of land and heaven, and distant view which enclosed him; sometimes buried in one of the loveliest valleys, watching the running brook, and the lambs disporting themselves by its side. His mind was in a wilderness of con-

fused thought, searching instinctively, but blindly, for something better, fairer, purer than the moral life around him; dimly observing, and yearning for that something which lay hidden under the beauteous veil which nature throws over the true and great realities.

He also made frequent pilgrimages to visit Big Ben, who was now removed to the county gaol, his offence being an unbailable felony. Gaols were at that time in their worst state of disorder, and what Charlie witnessed in those hideous dens of depravity and wretchedness, seemed to confirm the sort of moral despair into which he was falling.

It seemed to him as if the world was but one scene of disorder, barbarity, and wickedness, as if the very gipsies, whose manners and ways of thinking he was just learning to look upon with distrust and dislike, were angels of light compared to the other inhabitants of this soil.

Poor Big Ben felt it as he did; his gipsy blood could not brook the defilement of being brought into this daily, close, unavoidable asso

ciation with the very scum of the land. The poor fellow blubbered and lamented himself to his friend, and bemoaned his crime, but more the company into which it had thrown him. He lost flesh and spirits, and soon became but the shadow of himself. Alas! he had no one to whom to look, was without hope and without fear. He was no Christian, poor Big Ben; he had been born in a Christian community, reared in a Christian land, but what profited that to him? He had never heard the healing words of forgiveness, peace and hope; he knew not that this world, in which he had lived so untaught and unthinking, and which now was become such a world of sorrow to him; he knew not the treasure it contained in its revealed history. Thousands and thousands knew, but had never taught him, that One had been, and was still, Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, who had arisen upon this darkness, with light and truth, making that darkness bright, and the rough places plain—that this sorrowful existence was not all—but was the fore-

runner and preface to another, and that a lovelier and a happier life lay behind it. No one of the thousands and thousands, had taught poor Big Ben this.

He was born in a Christian country, poor Big Ben! myriads around him were solaced every day by truths such as these, but they never reached him, no one had taken the trouble to search him out, and acquaint him with them. He had naturally a warm, grateful, honest heart of his own, but he had been left to himself, not to nature! Oh, no! but to the evil influences of a corrupted and depraved society. And now, step by step, from little to more, from big to bigger, he had been betrayed into the commission of a great crime. The fine, young, feeling being who now stands by him, in that low, dark prison cell, where all sorts of wickedness is going on; he—illuminating those impure regions as by an angel's presence, with his pure and beautiful countenance—is in that respect, little better off than himself. He has by a sort of instinct, and the proud care of the

woman who treasured him, been preserved, as yet, from the contamination of vice—that change which takes place when man, from associating with wrong, begin to practise it, and sin and he become one. He had been as yet preserved from that; but he was, in fact, little more enlightened than his poor, big, rough, blubbering friend.

These things went strangely with him. From every visit to the prison, Charlie returned home more thoughtful and depressed. Something he wanted, a something surely that was to be found. In his way to and from the county gaol, and even in the very gaol itself, he became acquainted with forms and figures of things that belonged to a better order of being; but there seemed to be a great gulf between him and them. It was as if some enchanted wall of separation was around him, which shut him out from communion with all, but those of his clan and kind.

CHAPTER XIV.

One day Charlie had wandered farther than usual, over the more solitary part of those downy highlands. He had quitted the beaten road, pursuing his way over hill beyond hill, lost in his melancholy thoughts. At last he began to feel weary. He had entered a valley, which, perfectly unhabited, ran winding from north to south; it was intersected by a little stream, upon the banks of which some of the black-nosed sheep of the country were cropping the scanty herbage.

A few sallows and alders fringed the brook, and the hills rose boldly upon either side;

it was a lonely yet a pleasing sight — so still and tranquil! The blue sky was bright over head, and every now and then, a large bird, kite or raven, might be seen slowly winging its way across the blue depths, the sun, casting his black shadow along the southern side of the hill.

It was a scene such as the boy loved, and he sat down upon a little hillock of grass to contemplate it. He then became aware, that the valley was not so entirely shut out from the world as he had at first imagined, for close by the brink of the streamlet, a narrow foot-path ran.

He pursued it a little way, and when the winding valley made a sudden turn, came suddenly upon a beautiful scene. There the brook abruptly widened, forming a little transparent pool, crowned with a group of alders, whose branches meeting formed a sort of bower, which was now thrown into shadow, for the sun was behind it.

The little bower was already occupied; a

man was seated by the brink of the pool, under the shade of the trees, bathing his feet, as Dorothea of yore might have done, in the cool water. His appearance was that of a toil-worn traveller; his dress, though decent, being defiled with dust and travel; his hair was in considerable disorder, and his face wan and weary. He seemed to sit there, inhaling the sweet breeze that gently wafted up the valley, and refreshing himself with the delicious coolness.

From time to time he dipped his hand into the water, and threw the drops over his face; then he lifted up his countenance again, and gazed into the deep blue heavens, and, as he did so, something wild, vehement, inspired, almost unearthly, might be seen to flit over it.

There was that about the wayfarer, which at once struck the imagination of the boy; and without coming forward to discover himself, he stood there watching the proceedings of the person who had struck and interested him so much.

Presently, the man once more raising his pale face, with a passionate gesture of adoration to the sky, slowly and solemnly began to sing a psalm. A slow and solemn chant indeed it was, breaking through the almost awful silence of that lonely place; and these were the words with which it began:

"Through all the varying scenes of life,
In trouble or in joy,
The praises of my God shall still,
My heart and tongue employ.
Of His delivrance I will boast,
Till all that are distrest,
From my example comfort take,
And charm their griefs to rest."

Slow, solemn, simple, the notes rolled forth, every syllable distinctly articulated. He sang with a loud, powerful voice, filling the valley with his song, for he thought himself quite alone. The sounds—though born in a Christian land—the voice of sacred melody—was new to Charlie. He might have heard psalm-

singing, it is true, when at no great distance from a church, where service was going on, or the voice of some congregation or other, collected for field-preaching among the hills; but that was all, these things had only come to him with a vague sense of beautiful sound.

This was the first time that his mind had been awakened to the perception of a meaning in music; and certainly the first time that such a thing as religious verses, which he could listen to, and, in a measure, understand, had reached him.

The man still sang on, keeping his face lifted up towards the sky, with a sort of passionate fervour. When he had finished the first verse, he paused; it was almost as if he intended, that the meaning might sink deeper into the young listener's heart.

Charlie's memory was retentive; it had seized upon the lines, and he was devouring them in silent wonder. God! that *name*, at least, was not new to him. He had heard it invoked often enough, however, irreverently; and he had

a confused remembrance of his infant prayers; and he had found, even among the godless savages with whom he lived, some vague ideas of a God, the Creator. It was a subject upon which his thoughts had often been engaged, endeavouring to pierce the mystery that surrounded him.

"The praises of my God—
Of His deliverance I will boast—
From my example comfort take."

The man paused after this, as I said, as if in meditation. Presently, he struck up again; the strain was louder, even more passionate, than before; and the surrounding hills rang with it.

"Oh, magnify the Lord with me!
With me exalt His name.
When in distress to Him I called,
He to my rescue came.

"Their drooping hearts were soon refreshed
Who looked to Him for aid;
Descried success in every place;
A cheerful air displayed."

The boy crept nearer and nearer, with stealthy pace, his ear drinking in the sounds, fearful to lose a syllable of that which seemed directed to his very heart.

The pale face of the singer; his look and attitude of adoring ecstacy; the clear blue vault above; the deep solitude around; the hoar alders bending over the clear pool; the sweet, cool air; there was a spirit abroad pervading it all. Once more—once more—again the rich, clear voice is lifted up and rolls forth the pregnant verse once more:

> "Oh, make but trial of His love!
> Experience will decide
> How blest are they, and only they,
> Who in His truth confide."

It ceased: the man remained sitting upon the grass in silence, still gazing upwards, in an attitude of adoration.

The boy had crept nearer and nearer, till at last he unintentionally rustled the branches,

and the man turned his head and perceived him.

Charlie was about to retreat; but the traveller, after exclaiming rather hastily, "Who are you?" added so courteously, "Don't go away," upon seeing the face of the intruder, that Charlie came towards him without hesitation.

"What brought you here, young man?" said the stranger, kindly, as he approached. "I thought I had this little nook to myself. I believed no one else knew of this quiet pool and the little shy water-hen. What brought you here?"

"You were singing; and I loved to hear you."

"I believe it has pleased the Lord to bestow upon me a somewhat harmonious voice," replied the man. "I have been told so. Be it, and all things employed in His service," bending his head with reverence.

"The singing was very beautiful to me; but the singing was not all—not nearly all; the words!—the words!" faltered out the youth,

"they came upon me strangely. I have been fearfully in want of words like these; they come to me when I needed them."

"They are good words, and true words; and who, more than I, have cause to say so. Sit down by me, young man; this grass is soft and pleasant, and the little pool transparent and cool; these embowering trees are like the pleasant garden of the Lord. Oh, the refreshings He sends us here are great! Could God spread a table in the wilderness? Doubtless; and who knows it better than the wretch before you. 'He maketh the water-springs to flow in the wilderness, and sendeth refreshment to the dried land!' To the hardest heart, the most seared and desperate, God sends forth His voice, and that a strong voice; not loud and terrible, but strong and piercing, like a sharp sword, dividing the bones and the marrow; yet powerful to heal—powerful to heal. Oh, there is balm in Gilead, powerful to heal!"

"The God of whom you speak I feel *is*,"

replied the youth; "but He has not shown Himself to me. I know Him not. No one has told me of Him. Tell me who He is, and where He is to be found."

The man answered not, but fixed his eyes upon the youth's face with a deep, earnest gaze, and then he sighed deeply and said:

"Poor lost ones! poor lost ones! And what am I, that I should be as a brand snatched from the burning, when so many—oh!" and he groaned in spirit, then he slowly waved his head from side to side, as if pondering some deep mystery, and he said: "It is not the will of your Father, who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

And that assurance seemed to comfort him in a manner; for he was one of those who could not without agony, contemplate the fearful doom, to which so many blinded ones among his fellow-creatures were hastening. That thought haunted him night and day. It was his terrible, fixed idea.

"Perish!" said Charlie; "perish from what? We must all die?"

"Ay, apparently all — all die;" repeated the man; "but what is that? die once! Nothing. To die ever; *for ever*. The living death, the second death, oh, that is fearful! The second death, young man, that is what we should flee from. Fear not those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; fear *Him* who, after He hath killed, can cast both soul and body into hell. Yea, I say unto you, fear Him."

"Your words are very grand; they seem to tell me of great things; after we are killed, you say. Then it is not true, as Hesther says, that when I have laid the clods over her, there will be an end of her."

The answer to this was another deep groan. Then—

"And in a Christian country too!" and raising his appealing face to heaven: "How long, oh Lord! how long?"

There was after this a short silence, during

which the man kept his eyes pensively fixed upon the turf; whilst those of the youth were fastened upon his face, perusing the wan, wasted, fervent features. Over them it was plain the storms of intense grief and passion had at one time passed; for their vestiges were too deep to be effaced by time.

At length lifting up his eyes, which were now full of a melancholy compassion, mingled with doubt and perplexity, he said:

"The face is beautiful, the eye clear and pure, sin and folly have not dishonoured the image of the Creator there impressed. Whence do you come? Who are you? How have you been reared, that you should unite this horrible ignorance of your God, with a semblance of so much truth and purity."

"*That,* I do not know. I have been bred among the gipsies, but I am not of their race; I have been among them ever since I can remember, I should say; but there is a sort of a dim vision of other things haunting me. Hesther says, it is all nonsense, and that

it is a remembrance of fairy-land, and that I come from fairy-land. As a child I believed this, as a youth it will no longer satisfy me. I see no traces around me of those beings they call fairies; but when they talk, as some of them do, of God, I think I do see His traces, but I know Him not, and I want to know Him."

"And what! has no one come near you these long number of years — how many? fifteen!—who could tell you of such things?"

"I have lived among my own people. It is not our custom to associate much with the rest of the world. Some of our men do, as horse-jockeys, tinkers, cattle leeches. Some of our women as sellers of philtres and fortune-tellers; but Hesther never did any of these things. I loved not such dealings, nor those with whom such dealings would have made me acquainted; and besides Hesther was so wretched when I left her, that I could not bear to leave her."

"And you have never been within a church? No—that of course; but have you never heard

the word of God preached by those, who struck with horror at the dreadful destitution in which poor wretches, such as you speak of, are left, go forth and endeavour to lift up a voice in the wilderness?"

"I do not understand you. Field-preachers, perhaps you mean; I have heard our people speak of such, but I never chanced to hear any. The people I am with, scoff at these things."

"But *you* have never scoffed."

"No, I feared to scoff—I hated to scoff—to scoff at the deep dark mystery around me, seemed too horrible a thing. I thought it like a brute to live in indifference to the great thought, I seemed to feel differently from the rest. This thought pressed in upon my mind; it was a weight, a burden, yet which I could not shake off, and would not have done if I could, there was a hope, a sort of foreshadowing of what was to be in my mind, that told me it would not always remain thus with me; for thus, it had assuredly not always been. Sir, there lies among my thoughts a vision of a fair

angel clothed in white, with long flowing curls of golden hair, and with dark blue eyes, beautiful as that sky above us. I am kneeling upon her knee, and my two hands are clasped in hers. And I remember still how the words she taught me to say began: 'Our Father which art in Heaven.' It is in vain that Hesther endeavours to persuade me that all this is mere fancy. None of my fellows have such fancies."

"Wonderful! wonderful! Thy ways are in the great deep, and thy pathways in the wide waters. Mysterious are thy doings, oh Lord! and that my soul knoweth right well."

"Sir!"

"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Leave thy fatherless children, I will provide for them."

"Sir! I don't understand—"

"No, no; you do not, and yet you do. You said that you had perceived Him though He was hidden; had caught a glimpse of the skirts of His glory, even though He had passed by."

"I do not know what your words exactly mean; yet they have a strange power over me. Sir! I am a poor, lost ignorant youth. Would you be pleased to speak so that I could understand you?"

"I do wrong; I do greatly wrong to indulge in this vein. Yes, young man, I will speak plain; I will open to you tidings of exceeding joy."

And as Philip opened the Gospel to the eunuch, so this man now opened his mouth, and in simple sentences preached the everlasting Gospel to the breathless, awe-struck, soul-entranced listener.

I despair of making any one believe it. It requires much reflection, much exercise of that valuable gift of imagination, which enables us to fling ourselves as it were, into the place of others, to realise what those glad tidings really proved to a soul in this state.

Not a gross, animalised, brutish soul, to whom if these tidings come at all, they come but with a much-impaired force; but to a

mind like the one before us, which nature had gifted with the highest faculties of perception, reflection, reasoning and imagination, and which had long lived in a labyrinth of perplexed and darkened thoughts.

Whence came he? He was answered. Whither was he bound? He was answered. Whence sprang this beautiful form of nature around him, of whose loveliness he had such an exquisite sense and enjoyment? And wherefore and whither—wherefore this, whither tending? —All answered.

The replies given to these questions by the simple Christian, who was now engaged in disclosing his treasure of hope and confidence to the eager listener, were all-sufficient for him. To his simple understanding and unsophisticated views of things, what he was told, harmonized so perfectly with what he had felt and seen, that it came at once upon his soul with the force of unquestionable truth.

And oh! how mighty was the change effected! A new birth, indeed! Springing

into a new world of existence—as completely new as when the babe first springs into this world's life.

Everything around him was changed—every relation and perception altered; for the very element in which all these things existed was no longer the same. Moral life, spiritual life, life renewed after death—interminable. Existences unseen, but present, and to a certain degree within perception—glorious, benevolent, protective, good! A course to be pursued; an obedience to be rendered; time to be accounted for; the great and the good to be done.

His mind seemed overwhelmed with the rush of new ideas. He could scarcely breathe. He was almost as one dead. He grew pale with emotion; his heart stood still as he listened. As the curtain rose, and the glorious visions were disclosed, they seemed too bright for mortal sense. His brain reeled under them. His young mind, nurtured by the impressions of the great nature around him, found neither doubt nor difficulty. The answer to all his

questions was given; the object of all his searchings found; the dumb yearning of his inner life satisfied. All was complete, all harmonious, all, to his naturally clear understanding, logical.

To doubt that the great problem was resolved, the true answer given, would have appeared to him the wildest absurdity. He felt as intuitive a perception that he held the true exposition of the great question, as if the inevitable solution of a mathematical problem had been expounded to him.

CHAPTER XV.

"Do not leave me—do not leave us! Come to the tents of my poor gipsy brethren, and tell them what you have been telling me. Oh! you cannot guess how greatly—greatly we are all in want of a teacher like you!"

"I cannot come;" and as the man spoke thus, he turned suddenly pale, and painful recollections seemed to disturb him. "No, no, I cannot come with you: my call lies other ways. And yet—" checking himself—"wherefore say I this? Am I not devoted? Is not my vow, to go wherever I am most wanted? And yet, I greatly fear, young man, if I did

come, those rude men of whom you speak would deride and scoff at me—perhaps misuse one like *me*, who presumed to speak the words of everlasting life. I—I—what am I, that I should be sufficient to do the Lord's work among *them* ?"

"Come and tell them what you have told me."

The man seemed to hesitate.

"You will not leave us in this manner?" urged Charlie. "What is to become of me, if you go away and leave me? With these new thoughts just put into my mind, and nothing to strengthen them, already a thousand questions seem struggling for words, impatient for an answer."

"You shall have that which will answer them all."

He drew forth sundry books out of the little wallet that lay upon the grass by his side, and selecting a Testament bound in the cheapest and commonest manner, presented it to him.

"This," he said, "will make you wise unto salvation."

"But ah! I cannot read."

"Not read!"

"No! Pages of printed books are all darkness to me."

"Then how have you learned to think and to speak as you do?"

"I don't know. Some words please me, and I use them; some displease me, and I do not use them. The woman who stands to me in the place of a mother has a lofty utterance at times. I learn from her."

"You would like to learn to read?"

"If books have in them such things as you have told me, yes; but I have not wanted books."

"Listen, and you shall hear how books speak."

And he took the book, and opening at the Gospel of St. John, read the discourse of the evening before the Crucifixion.

"Teach me to read! Give me that book!"

"You will soon learn—let us begin now. See, the sun has not yet sunk behind the mountain-top. It will be at least two hours before the long shadows cover the valley. Sit down by me, and let us begin."

You will not suppose they began in the usual spelling-book manner. Subtle, intelligent, fresh and strong as were the powers of the pupil, in two hours' time even much was done.

A fresh world of wonders burst upon Charlie.

I scarcely know a more delightful, intellectual pleasure than that which we feel at the moment when written characters upon which we have long pored, discerning in them nothing but ugly and confused dots and lines, suddenly become instinct with life and intelligence. Of all the magics and magnetisms, I know, or ever heard of, nothing seems to me more wonderful than this, and the more I think of the miraculous connection between the written word without and the living word within, the more wonderful it appears to me.

The sun had now long set behind the hills, and the shadows fell heavy upon the narrow valley, the little pool and the alders; but the twilight was soft and clear, and a few stars began to glimmer in the heavens, as the book was closed, and the traveller rising from his seat, began to adjust his wallet, as if about to depart.

The youth stood beside him whilst he was thus occupied, musing deeply. Deep thought and deep melancholy were upon his face.

"Farewell!" said the traveller, reaching out his hand, "when shall we meet again for another lesson?"

"You are not going away!" cried Charlie, again starting from his reverie. "You cannot go away and leave us all. You will stay with us a little time—you will tell these poor, poor creatures what you have told me. Oh, you cannot think how much they need it!"

"Not now—my path leads another way. Young man, you do not speak to one pursuing a chosen course, but driven forwards whether

he will or not. I do not go where I wish, but where I must; for if I do this thing willingly it is well, but if not woe is me."

The youth looked at him as if he did not understand—as if he waited for more.

"Shall I tell him? Must I tell *him* too?" the man exclaimed passionately: is there no one—no one—from whom I may hide the dreadful tale! Oh, wretch, wretch!" he burst forth with great agony, "and is it still so—ever so—base wretch, will you refuse to tell what the Lord hath done for you? Refuse! that you may save this poor shame-seared cheek a few hot blushes! You think me a good man, I dare say, child," he said, suddenly turning round, and almost fiercely addressing him. "You deceive yourself! There is not walking upon this earth a blacker criminal than I am."

The young man started back he turned white—he looked dreadfully shocked and disappointed.

"You thought because you found me singing

psalms here by myself;" continued the other bitterly, "that I was even such a one as you are—one of the pure lambs of Christ's own flock; of which indeed you have ever been. Not yet called indeed, but ready—ready—when the Master's voice was heard. But I! what was I? Oh, one of his lambs!—one of his lambs! But it was that one, the gracious Master went to seek when it was lost—lost—lost in the wilderness. It *was* lost and is found. And therefore—therefore!" he cried, his wasted cheek flashing with a sudden fire, and his eye lighting with a wild enthusiasm; "and therefore I will proclaim His glory and my shame—my shame! Yes, yes—but not now—not now—another time. I could not do it now."

And his voice and attitude sunk again to despondency. After a little time he seemed to recover himself, and he went on thus: "This is it: your people—yours is the tribe there, is it not?—your people are too much accustomed to walk in the dark paths, not to know

most of those who have been there also. I would not have them know me again. Perhaps some of them might know me. No, no—better not, better not. You, I will tell; you shall learn all. My soul is knit to thee as David's was to Jonathan. I would have thy love and thy honour—be thy revered teacher in Christ—this is what I would fain be—but no, no—I will not be a hypocrite even for this. It is bitter, but bitter or not, it shall be done.

"Child — child—who knows?" and again a sudden flash of exultation gleamed in his eyes; and then it faded away into the deepest gloom, as he said—"No, no, no—what is done cannot be undone." Then, with a fresh burst of enthusiasm: "But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Thanks and praises and honours, to the Lamb for ever; our robes have been washed, and made white in His blood."

He kept gathering his things in a hasty, flurried manner, together as he went on

talking in this wild, fitful manner. When all was finished and he was ready to depart, he stooped down, scooped some of the water from the little pool, and bathed his temples and forehead. The paroxysm of his mind, which almost amounted to frenzy, seemed to have subsided, and taking the hand of the youth in his, he said more calmly:

"You understand, there are reasons why I had better not go with you; they might some of them know me, and if they did, my words would be worse than vain; they would sound like horrid mockery and blasphemy in their ears. Now I must pursue my journey where my call leads me, and that is to the county gaol. The prisoners there know my face well, some of them my history; I am a visible example to *them* of the power of God; they recognise it in me, for they know all. Your people, if they chanced to know part, would not believe the rest. It is you, not I, who must go among them. Come again here to-morrow. You must learn to read. I shall

stay in these parts a few weeks, in order to teach you. Then you may go forth, a worthy messenger of God, and bear His holy tidings to these poor wretches, to whose horrible situation you have been wonderfully awakened."

Perplexity and doubt were in the young man's eyes; he seemed scarcely to be able to take in all that was said, yet his countenance kindled. He had so deplored the fate of those around him, had been awakened to so strong a perception of their wants and their misery, that the idea of going among them to help and enlighten, bearing the joyful tidings he had just learned, seemed to his heart a joy too big to be contained.

The new perceptions with which his soul was filled, and which seemed to come so home to his spirit, admirably as his nature was calculated to receive them, these enlarged prospects, these noble hopes, these glorious Presences, he longed to impart the great tidings to his poor lost fellows of the

wilds, as yet being happily ignorant of that difference in their original temperaments, which might make what was so congenial to his nature, a strange and antagonistic element to theirs.

"Farewell, again," said the man, extending his hand, and in act to depart.

But Charlie still held him fast, detaining his hand and looking wistfully into his face.

"To the gaol! Did I not hear you say you were going to the county gaol?"

"Yes; that is my first station."

"I have a friend there. He is committed for housebreaking; and, there was a death—there was murder—"

The hand which he held, began violently to twitch and tremble as the horrid word was uttered. The stranger grew pale, with that paleness which a sudden sickness at the heart produces.

"Let me go, let me go," he said, angrily; "why do you keep me here longer? Let me

go! What do you mean by using that hideous word? Oh, oh! the worm that never dieth; the fire that never can be quenched! It comes again, it comes again! yet there *is* peace. Well, well, your friend has committed a murder, has he?" with a strange bitter tone; "and who can you send to him better than I? who better? who better?"

"No, no; he did not commit the murder. Poor fellow! he would not hurt a fly—great, big, rough Ben, rough as he is, he wouldn't hurt a fly; but he got mixed up with a fearful gang, all through a woman. He is guilty of housebreaking, and he is suspected of the murder. He lies there, poor fellow, surrounded by wretches, worse than ever he was, though they may not have committed felonies punishable with death. There they are, young and old, scoffing and swearing, and blaspheming, and talking; oh! it makes the hair of the head stand on end to hear them; and the poor, fellow, Sir, he looks, and he is, more like an innocent stupid bull calf,

who unwittingly has knocked down and hurt somebody, never thinking it was wrong; he is more like that than anything else. He's not as one of those scoffers round him, who know what they are at, and what they do. It would make your heart bleed, to see the poor fellow, looking like a big child, so surprised to find himself there; and still more to find himself a felon, a housebreaker, a thief, and a consort with murderers. He knows no more than a baby how it all came about; but the woman persuaded him. Sir, what a wretch is that woman! for he loves her so, he would lay his heart before her feet for her to trample upon, and would give his life willingly for her, any day."

"You want me to see and speak to this man. Do you guess why I am the properest of all men upon earth to go and preach to the murderer?"

The wildness of his eyes was returning.

"No, Sir; only that you seem to me ready to do good to any one; and, above all,

to preach to the lost ignorant; and this poor boy, this Big Ben, wants your help very much."

"He shall have it; yes, what help I can give—what help a wretch, once lost, like myself, can give."

His mind seemed still unsettled; he was aware of it himself; again he stooped down, and bathed his brows with the water. This seemed, as before, to compose him; he settled his wallet upon his shoulders, and then he promised Charlie that he would see his friend the next day; and the day following, would, towards the evening, be again at the spot where they were standing, and repeat the reading-lesson.

"You must learn to read, in the first place," he said, now speaking as quietly and rationally as any other man. "That is of indispensable necessity, before you can take upon yourself the task for which the Lord seems to have prepared you. His treasures are hidden in caskets of written words; and we must possess the key,

before we can minister these rich things. Come, again, then, to-morrow; and perhaps, perhaps — may I find help, as I mean rightly! perhaps I shall have the courage, sometime or other — well, well — good night, good night."

And again wringing the youth by the hand, he turned away, and slowly and meditatively, took his path in the direction which led towards the county town.

So they parted, and the boy turned home. It was now late, and as he emerged from the valley, and mounted the ascent above, the wild expanse of open downs and hills stretched upon every side around him, like the breadth of the ocean; all sleeping tranquilly in the bathing light, for the night was preternaturally clear, and the heavens were all alive, spangled with stars, which seemed big as so many suns.

Right before him, as he ascended the bank, and looked southwards, was the splendid constellation of Orion, with its glittering lumi-

naries, a planet or twinkling sun on every side. Glorious spectacle!

Filled with his new ideas, the youth gazed upwards, awe-struck; his soul was swelling. That wide-spread vault above, alive with eyes; the sleeping world beneath, hill beyond hill, softening in the dusky twilight! Had his mind been imbued with poetic reading, the outpouring of his spirit might have found words, and he could have exclaimed:

"But, oh! thou mighty Mind, whose powerful word
Said, thus let all things be, and thus they were—
Where shall I seek Thy presence? How unblamed
Invoke Thy dread perfection?
Have the broad eyelids of the morn beheld thee?
Or does the beamy shoulder of Orion support Thy throne?"

And then, as his heart melted and trembled at the deep sense of the reality of the great mystery of the awful Being, whose majesty is, in the immensity of the star-clad heavens

disclosed even but faintly, he might have added:

"Oh! look with pity down on erring, guilty man—
Not in Thy robes of terror clad—
Not with those lightnings armed which guilty Sinai felt,
When fear appalled the scattered tribes—
Thou hast a gentler voice, which whispers comfort to the swelling heart;
Abashed, yet longing to behold her Maker!"

The fires were extinguished, the encampment wrapped in profound repose, when Charlie entered it. There they lay, the rude huts scattered about, under the tall elm trees, which lifted their huge heads towards the star-besprinkled sky. A dog raising his head suddenly with a sharp cry, and laying it down again with a little comfortable grumble upon perceiving who it was, alone saluted him. He reached the tent of his foster-mother, which stood apart from the rest, hoping to find her asleep, but she was still watching for him. She was sitting upon the

ground, with her back to the tent door, her eyes fixed upon the planet Jupiter, which was shining full upon her.

"You are very late, Charlie," she began, lifting up her head and looking at him, but not otherwise changing her attitude. "Where have you been all this time? At the gaol? It is well to remember friends in adversity; but there is a time for all things, and a time to remember friends at home."

"I have not been to the gaol. This is not a day when I could be admitted."

"Then where have you been, to keep away so late? It is not well, Charlie. Hesther sits alone, looking at that pure star, till its whiteness seems to burn into her soul; not to make it white too, but to show how hideous its blackness and deformity is. Hesther's mind is waning, Charlie; it flares up and down like a lamp quivering in its socket, and the oil is exhausting fast away. You should not leave

me so long now, boy, for my heart is weary, weary. Sometimes when you do not come back at your time, I think you will never come back at all, and then! You should not give Hesther that pain. She has borne much; but that thought, oh, it is the death agony! You should not do it, Charlie."

He had sat down by her whilst she was pouring out this sort of lament, in a wild, half-musical kind of tone, and her thin hand, almost black, so completely was it withered, was held kindly in his, as in a soothing manner he began:

"Mammy must not be sorry that I staid late this time, and she should not vex herself. Have I not promised that I will never, never leave her? Let that comfort her. You must not vex yourself, my mammy, if henceforward I am oftener away; for I am no more a boy, and I must be up and doing."

"A boy! no; no longer a boy!" said she, turning to him, and fondly stroking down his beautiful hair. "No; the little angel-boy is

become a man. He cannot stay here long; it is not possible. The butterfly is bursting, *has* burst its case. But only let me die first, only let me die first! Tell me where you have been," she said, changing her tone suddenly.

"I have been over the hills on *that* side, and down into one of the deep valleys, where I never was before, and there I met with a man—a traveller—and I have spent the time with him."

"A man! a traveller! One upon the road? One of our own people?"

"Not one of our own people."

"And how came you to get into talk with him? They are bad, bad, bad, those Gorgios. You are best kept to yourself, and to your own clan."

"No, mammy, that is not so. I am no longer best kept to myself; and, from my own clan, I learn nothing. I found this man dressed in a simple garb, not such as the Gorgios you despise wear, much such as one of ours might

have on. He had a wallet by his side, and he sat by the brink of a little solitary pool, all alone, singing."

"Singing! What should he be singing? Some foolish song or other, better not listened to."

"Songs of thanks to Him above, who made him, and you, and me, and all of us, and who hears us *all*."

"Stuff! A wandering parson — a gospel engro. What good could he do you?"

"Much: he told me of great things, which, when you will hear, I will tell you."

"Tell me! tell me! waste of time to tell me," shaking her head. "And what other fine things did he tell you?"

"He gave me this, and he told me I must read it. I am to learn to read it."

"A book! — let me look at it; let me touch it. And he will teach you to read! Ah! I see it, I see it—I read it, I read it. The hour is coming; it will soon, soon be here. I *shall* be dead first! I *shall* be dead

first! I *will* be dead first! for lose him—I cannot —cannot do it. Teach you to read, says he? Make a clerk of thee! Ay, to be sure—to be sure. It is all right—all right! Yes," turning to him her large fevered eyes, and gazing upon him fervently; "yes, to be sure. He shall not go up into the lordly chambers ashamed; he must not do that. When the time comes, they will suppose him to be a poor, ignorant, brutified boy—a beast! a wild beast! Not so. Oh! the free air and the wild hills have not nourished him so; but ignorant! ignorant! None of their fine letter learning, that they think so much of; none of that at least. Ha! ha! but he shall have learned to read.

"It is well," she ended this outburst with saying; "the man will teach you to read, you say: go to him and learn. Learn well, and learn fast; for the thread of Hesther's life is well-nigh spun; and when *that* is ended, you must hear of something. Yes, when that is over," pressing her hand to her bosom, where the little glove in its satchel hung sus-

pended, "we must undraw curtains, and reveal secrets, and—oh! that I could live to see the end. But they would take him away from me."

END OF VOL. II.

LONDON:
Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.

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3 0112 051353404